NATION

Questioning religions will break civilisations, says SC

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Mkts end choppy: Sensex sheds 114 pts, Nifty 4.3 pts

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Surface Tension: DC batters face stern Varun-Narine test

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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112 & still short: Guv stalls Vijay's CM dream

Vijay meets Guv for the 2nd time; TVK reaches out to Left parties, VCK; Oppn alleges BJP plot

CHENNAI, 7 MAY

TVK Chief Vijay's wait for the Chief Minister's chair remained in a stalemate on Thursday, as Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar declined to invite him to form the government citing lack of numbers.

This is more than 72 hours after his party emerged as the single largest formation in the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections on Sunday.

TVK secured 108 seats in the 234-member Assembly, falling 10 short of the majority mark of 118. Even with Congress support, the party's tally stands at 113. However, Vijay needs to vacate one of the two seats he won, bringing the tally to 112.

Party sources said some leaders were also considering legal options against the Governor's decision, though no formal move has been announced.

Vijay reaches out to Left

Vijay met the Governor at Lok Bhavan for the second time in two day as TVK intensified efforts to secure backing from the Left parties, VCK and IUML. The three parties will take a final decision on extending support on Friday.

Meanwhile, DMK sources said party President and outgoing Chief Minister MK Stalin had asked alliance partners to remain within the Secular Progressive Alliance.

However, VCK Chief Thol Thirumavalavan joined Congress and Left leaders in criticising the Governor for not inviting the single largest party to form the government.

BJP-Guv nexus, says Oppn

Congress MP Manickam Tagore accused the BJP of attempting to "stall and manipulate" the mandate to prevent TVK from taking power, while senior advocate and MP Kapil Sibal alleged that the Governor was acting as an "agent" of the BJP. "Governments are not decided on the lawns of Lok Bhavan. They are decided on the floor of the House," the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee said while announcing a statewide protest against the Governor and the BJP-led Centre on Friday.

TVK Chief Vijay met Governor Rajendra Arlekar for the first time on Wednesday at Lok Bhavan, in Chennai—*PTI*

Arlekar, who is also Governor of Kerala, has longstanding links with the RSS and BJP, having joined the party in 1989 and served as Goa BJP president.

BJP spokesperson Narayanan Tirupathy defended the Governor, saying all decisions would be taken "democratically" and according to the Constitution.

In the past

The Opposition said that the Governors invited BJP-led alliances to form governments despite lacking a clear majority, including Karnataka in 2018, when BS Yediyurappa was invited despite BJP falling short of numbers; Goa and Manipur in 2017, where BJP formed governments although Congress emerged as the single largest party; and Maharashtra in 2019, when Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar were sworn in during an early morning ceremony. CPI(M) General Secretary MA Baby said constitutional precedent required the Governor to invite the single largest party in a fractured mandate and allow it to prove majority on the Assembly floor.

TVK stirs, AIADMK says no invite from Vijay

TVK cadres staged protests outside Lok Bhavan demanding that Vijay be invited to form the government.

Amid speculation, AIADMK leader S Semmalai denied reports that party Chief Edappadi K Palaniswami would meet the Governor. He also said AIADMK had received no request from TVK seeking support. —*PTI*

— PTI

Five drown after boat capsizes in Yamuna

HAMIRPUR, 7 MAY

Five people, including four children, drowned after a boat capsized in the Yamuna river, and an 11-year-old boy remains missing, police reported. The incident occurred on Wednesday evening in Kutubpur Patiya hamlet under Bhauli gram panchayat, when nine people, excluding the boatman, were returning from a river island. The boat lost balance around 7pm and capsized. The boatman, Dheeru, rescued three individuals—Vishnu, Rinku, and Parul. The remaining six — Akanksha, 9, Rani, 9, Brijrani, 25, Labhyansh, 5, Mahesh, 6, and Aditya, 11, went missing. Rescue teams recovered five bodies later, but efforts continue to find Aditya. Heavy rain hampered rescue operations, with officials from the National Disaster Response Force assisting. The Chief Minister has ordered an investigation.—*PTI*

150 kids fall ill after school mid-day meal in Bihar

SAHARSA, 7 MAY

More than 150 children fell ill after consuming mid-day meal food at a school in Baluaha village, officials said. The incident happened at a middle school, with 105 children currently undergoing treatment at Sadar Hospital and around 50 admitted to Mahishi Public Health Centre. Saharsa District Magistrate Deepesh Kumar stated, "The children were initially treated at the primary health centre, but many were later referred to the Sadar Hospital. Their condition has improved, but they will be monitored closely. There is no need to panic." Some family members claimed that a snake was found in the meal, but authorities have not commented. Doctors say the children are experiencing mild fever and are being treated accordingly.—*PTI*

— ANI

Man sexually harasses cabin crew on B'luru flight

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

A 63-year-old passenger from Kerala was arrested for allegedly sexually harassing a 24-year-old cabin crew member on a flight, police said on Thursday. Police said the incident happened on a Bahrain to Bengaluru flight. Based on the complaint from the female cabin crew member, the KIA police registered a case against the accused under Section 75(2) (sexual harassment) of BNS 2023. The incident occurred on 4 May aboard the flight, when the suspect allegedly behaved inappropriately with the air hostess, by trying to touch her. She immediately warned him, and brought the incident to the notice of the flight's captain, officials said. When questioned, he reportedly denied misconduct and termed it as a "friendly gesture." After the flight landed at terminal-2 of the airport, the cabin crew filed a complaint with the police. —*PTI*

5 hurt after blast near RG Kar victim's home

KOLKATA, 7 MAY

Five BJP workers gathered near the residence of Panihati MLA Ratna Debnath, the mother of the RG Kar Medical College rape-murder victim, were injured in a crude bomb attack in North 24 Parganas on Thursday. This was hours after close aide of BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari was killed.

Police said the blast occurred near St Xavier's Institution in Panihati late on Wednesday night when BJP workers were interacting with residents in Ward 2 of Dutta Road. A group of motorcycle-borne assailants allegedly hurled crude bombs before fleeing the spot. The injured were admitted to RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata.

Officials said a heavy police deployment has been made in the area, with CCTV footage being examined and raids underway to identify those involved. BJP alleged that the attackers were backed by TMC.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, speaking at a closed-door meeting with newly elected MLAs and senior leaders at her Kalighat residence, said she would not resign. "Let them impose President's Rule if they want. Let them dismiss me if they want," she said . Mamata refusal to resign ended in an anti-climax as Governor RN Ravi dissolved the state's legislative assembly. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 3*

WOMAN RAPED IN BAGALKOT GOVT HOSPITAL

BAGALKOT, 7 MAY

A woman was allegedly raped at the Bagalkot District Hospital where she staying to care for her ailing brother. The accused, a contractual employee, dragged her to the washroom and sexually assaulted her.

The 34-year-old woman, a widow, was staying at the hospital for nearly a month attending to her brother, who was undergoing treatment. During this period, she came in contact with the accused, Farid Saab Dangi, a Group-D outsourced employee at the hospital.

According to the complaint, the accused allegedly threatened the woman and dragged her into a washroom between midnight and 2am on 4 May, where he raped her. He then locked the woman in the washroom before fleeing the scene.

Hearing her cries for help, other people present at the hospital opened the locked door and rescued her.

After the survivor narrated the incident, enraged attendants and relatives apprehended the accused and handed him over to the police.

A case was registered at Bagalkot Women Police Station under Sections 127(2), 352, 351(2), 64 and 64(2)(e) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Hospital Medical Superintendent Dr Mahesh Koni ordered termination of the accused. "This incident has brought disrepute to the hospital. Measures will be taken to ensure such incidents do not recur, with greater emphasis on the safety and security of women," Dr Koni said. —*Salar News*

HC clears 22 in Sohrabuddin 'fake' encounter case

MUMBAI, 7 MAY

The Bombay HC upheld the acquittal of the 22 accused in the 2005 case of the alleged fake encounter of gangster Sohrabuddin Shaikh, his wife Kausar Bi and his aide Tulsiram Prajapati.

Chief Justice Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam Ankhad on Thursday dismissed the appeals filed by Shaikh's brothers, Rubabuddin and Nayabuddin, challenging the December 2018 judgment of a special court acquitting all the accused in the case.

Among the 22 accused acquitted, 21 were junior officers from Gujarat and Rajasthan police, who were allegedly part of the teams that abducted the three and later killed them. The remaining one accused was the owner of a farmhouse in Gujarat, where Shaikh and Kausar Bi were allegedly illegally detained. The special court, while acquitting the accused, had observed that the prosecution had failed to establish a cogent case to suggest there had been any conspiracy to kill Shaikh and the others, and that the present accused persons had any role in it. — *PTI*

>>>*More on Page 4*

Militants torch houses in Manipur

IMPHAL, 7 MAY

Heavily armed militants attacked several villages in Manipur's Kamjong district near the India-Myanmar border on Thursday morning, torching houses and forcing residents to flee into nearby forests, officials said.

Police said the attack took place around 4am in the Tangkhul Naga villages of Namlee, Wanglee and Choro under Kasom Khullen police station area. The settlements are located less than a kilometre from the international border.

At least one elderly woman was injured while attempting to escape. Villagers said two houses in Namlee, three to four houses in Wanglee and several structures in Choro, except a church, were burnt down.

Security forces, including Assam Rifles, later reached the area to assess the situation.

Phungyar MLA L Keishing alleged that the attack was carried out from across the border by Myanmar-based militant groups, the Kuki National Army (Burma) and the People's Defence Force (PDF). He claimed around 100 armed militants crossed into Kamjong district and targeted multiple border villages.

"So far, the state had been seeing internal conflicts, but today there has been external aggression," Keishing said, adding that the attack occurred around 3.30 am.

He further alleged that two persons, including a woman, were missing and may have been taken away by the attackers. —*PTI*

India asks B'desh to verify nationality of 3,000

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

India on Thursday urged Bangladesh to expedite nationality verification of over 2,800 suspected illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, days after Dhaka warned it would act if any "push-in" incidents occur from the Indian side.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said New Delhi's comments must be seen in the context of repatriation of illegal Bangladeshis from India, which requires cooperation from Dhaka. "Over 2,862 cases of nationality verification are pending with Bangladesh, some for over five years," he said, adding that India's policy mandates repatriation of illegal foreign nationals as per law and bilateral arrangements.

His remarks came in response to Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman, who recently said Dhaka would take action against any forced pushbacks.

TEESTA STANDOFF

Jaiswal also addressed concerns over possible China-Bangladesh cooperation on the Teesta river, noting that India and Bangladesh share 54 rivers and maintain structured bilateral mechanisms on water issues.

This was after Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman, during a visit to China, reportedly sought Beijing's involvement in the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project (TRCMRP).

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said ties between China and Bangladesh were not "directed at or influenced by any third party". He also said China was ready to align the Belt and Road Initiative with Bangladesh's development strategy. The Teesta originates in the eastern Himalayas, flows through Sikkim and West Bengal, and enters Bangladesh. —*PTI*

A YEAR OF OP SINDOOR

'India has right to defend itself'

On the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor, India reaffirmed its right to defend itself against Pakistan-backed cross-border terrorism and pledged to strengthen the global fight against it. External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated, "We are marking the first anniversary of Op Sindoor today. The entire world saw the Pahalgam terrorist attack for what it was. We gave a befitting reply to Pakistan for its sponsorship of cross-border terrorism." He added, "The world knows that cross-border terrorism has long been an instrument of state policy for Pakistan." Jaiswal said. In response to the attack, India launched Operation Sindoor last year, conducting airstrikes on nine terror sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, eliminating at least 100 terrorists. **More on Page 4**

ROAD TO TIGER RESERVE

Govt clears Varanasi to Kolkata eway via protected forest

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

An expert panel of the environment ministry has recommended the grant of environment clearance (EC) to a 235-km greenfield expressway connecting Varanasi and Kolkata, which requires the diversion of more than 103 hectares of reserved and protected forest land in West Bengal.

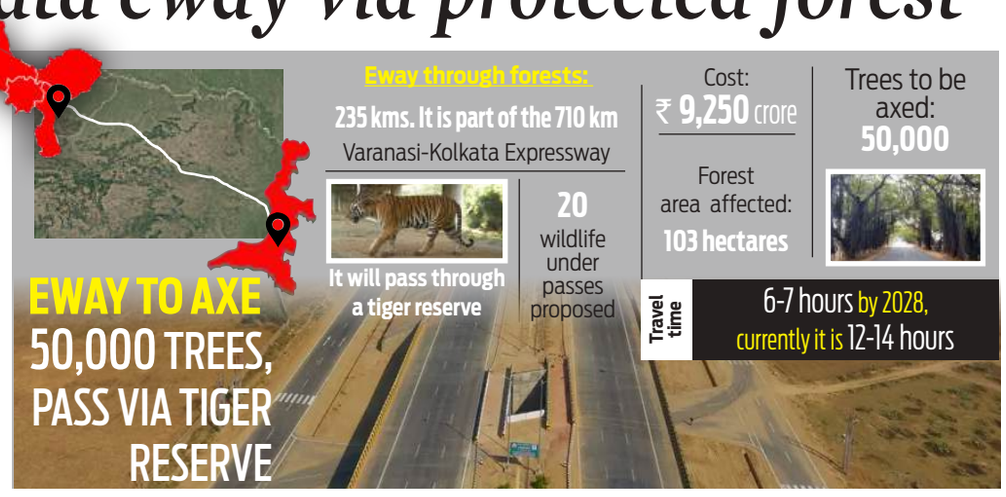
A part of the proposed National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) project, which involves the construction of a four-to-six lane expressway and costs Rs 9,250 crore, will also pass through a tiger landscape.

The project was discussed at the 444th meeting of the expert appraisal committee between 23 and 24 April.

The project will run through the districts of Purulia, Bankura, Pashchim Mednipur, Hoogli and Howrah, and will require cutting of 40,000 trees in non-forest areas and 10,000 in forest areas.

While the Jangal Mahal Elephant Corridor is located 7.75 km to the south of the project, "the elephant corridors are crossing the present highway alignment at different location". West Bengal has the highest number of elephant corridors in the country.

Also, the study area of the proposed project hosts 17 Schedule-I species under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, such as jackal, sambar deer, striped hyena, Indian fox, Indian elephant and leopard. These species are given most protection. The NHAI has proposed 20 elephant-cum-wildlife underpasses. The EAC also said that the wildlife underpasses have to be eight to 10 metres in height. —*PTI*


EWAY TO AXE
50,000 TREES, PASS VIA TIGER RESERVE
Eway through forests:
235 kms. It is part of the 710 km Varanasi-Kolkata Expressway
It will pass through a tiger reserve
20 wildlife under passes proposed
Cost: ₹ 9,250 crore
Forest area affected: 103 hectares
Trees to be axed: 50,000
Travel time
6-7 hours by 2028, currently it is 12-14 hours

FRP revision not enough: Sugarcane farmers

Say Centre should hike it to Rs 4,450/tonne

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

The association said the revision wouldn't even meet the cost of production —*SALAR*

The State Sugarcane Growers' Association of Karnataka slammed the Centre's decision to fix the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane at Rs 3,650 per tonne for the 2026-27 season. Instead, they demanded that the FRP be fixed at Rs 4,450 per tonne based on cultivation costs, in line with the Karnataka government's recommendation, a statement said.

State Organising Secretary Attahalli Devaraj said the price for cane with a sugar recovery of 10.25 per cent was lower than the actual cost of production, calling it revision inadequate and unfair.

The association warned that the current pricing could discourage farmers from continuing to grow sugarcane. The body also accused sugar mills of exploiting farmers even as they generated revenues from a range of by-products including sugar, ethanol, electricity, and compost. The statement said that mills frequently delayed payments to farmers.

On 5 May, the Union Cabinet revised the FRP.

BJP Leader R Ashoka had lauded the revision, stating on X that it would benefit "about 5 crore sugarcane farmers in the country, including about 8 to 10 lakh sugarcane farmers in Karnataka". He criticised the State government, alleging that it was unable to meet the additional Rs 100 it promised to sugarcane farmers after massive protests. The Congress revised the pricing, splitting a Rs 50 hike between the government and sugar mills. However, some farmers and Congress leaders alleged that certain mills are not paying their share. —*Agencies*

K'TAKA RANKS 2ND IN COUNTRY FOR FARMER SUICIDES

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

Labourers load sacks of cauliflower onto a truck for transportation to a market, in Chikkamagaluru —*PTI*

Karnataka once again recorded the second highest number of farmer suicides, according to the latest data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

"10,546 persons involved in farming sector (consisting of 4,633 farmers/cultivators and 5,913 agricultural labourers) have committed suicides during 2024, accounting for 6.2 per cent of total suicides victims (1,70,746) in the country," the Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India Report 2024 released on Wednesday stated.

Maharashtra came in first at 36.1 per cent, followed by Karnataka at 28.1 per cent. The states with the next highest are noticably lower: Madhya Pradesh 7.9 per cent, Andhra Pradesh, 7.4 per cent, and Tamil Nadu, 4.8 per cent.

The 2024 figure is marginally lower to 2023 of 10,786 suicides. However, for both Karnataka and Maharashtra, there was a rise. Notably, agricultural labourers suicides was higher than farmers/cultivators, a first since 2021.

SUICIDES IN B'LURU

Mega cities, which have a population of over 10,00,000 or more, recorded a total 26,150 suicides in 2024, a rise from the 26,095 the previous year.

"Four Metropolitan cities — Delhi city (2,905), Bengaluru (2,403), Chennai (1,525), and Mumbai (1,406) reported higher number of suicides," the report stated. "These four cities reported 31.5 per cent of the total suicides reported from 53 mega cities. Bengaluru has shown an increase of 1.4 per cent (from 2,370 suicides in 2023 suicides to 2,403 suicides in 2024)." —*Salar News*

How K'taka Cong leaders won Kerala

MYSURU, 7 MAY

AICC Secretaries assigned for Kerala BM Sandeep Kumar, Mansoor Ali Khan and PV Mohan with party leader Deepadas Munshi—*SALAR*

As the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) in Kerala is set to assume power after a decade, Karnataka can take the credit for contributing to the party's stupendous victory.

Three Congressmen from Karnataka -- Mansoor Ali Khan, PV Mohan and BM Sandeep Kumar -- all AICC secretaries in charge of different zones of Kerala had pitched camp in the southern state months before the Assembly polls were announced in Kerala. Along with the trio was Kerala AICC General Secretary in charge Deepa Das Munshi.

The UDF collectively won 102 seats of the total 140 Assembly seats with the Congress alone securing a majority of 63 seats. The Indian Union Muslim League won 22 seats, the Kerala Congress (KEC) seven seats, the Revolutionary Socialist Party three seats and the Kerala Congress (Jacob) one seat.

Speaking to Salar News, Khan who is AICC Secretary in-charge of Kerala and Lakshadweep said of the 48 seats in his North zone also called the Malabar region, the Congress won 40 seats. This zone includes the Assembly constituencies comprising of Kasargod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode and Malappuram.

``The victory reflects the discipline, unity and sustained efforts of our cadre. This victory belongs to every UDF worker, leader and voter who chose progress, unity and justice,'' he added.

Mohan who was in charge of the Central Zone comprising of Palakkad, Thrissur, Ernakulam, Iddukki and Kotayyam called the Kochi region, said that the main challenge was to activate the workers. "All the Congress leaders spent more time with the workers than with the voters. We had started working on the ground from 2024, and the anti-incumbency against the Communist party-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) ruled government was palpable,'' he maintained.

Sandeep was looking after South Kerala which includes districts of Alappuzha, Kolam, Thiruvananthapuram and Pathanamthitta collectively known as Travancore region.

The Congress wave swept across Kerala, and was not restricted to the north and central regions as predicted, with the party making significant inroads into the Hindu vote base of the LDF and the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The BJP won three seats, which according to Mohan was by default. The Congress could have garnered these three seats too, he added.

Khan was earlier AICC secretary in charge of Telangana, when the Congress won 64 of the 119 Assembly seats in 2023. This was the Congress' first victory after the formation of the Telangana state in 2014. —*Salar News*

Rajanna unsure if CM will continue for 5yrs

MYSURU, 7 MAY

Senior Congress MLA K N Rajanna said on Thursday that he is not sure if the party High Command will allow Siddaramaiah to continue as the Chief Minister.

Speaking to reporters after meeting Siddaramaiah at his residence in Mysuru, he said: "I will not say that the CM will change. (But) I will not say that he will remain either. The High Command should make a careful decision very soon. The longer the decision is delayed, the more it affects the party and the government."

Rajanna noted that Siddaramaiah had repeatedly clarified on various occasions that he would abide by the High Command's decision.

On who the possible candidates for the CM post are, the former minister said dozen leaders in the Congress, including AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge, could hold the top post. However, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has "more aspiration" for the post because he is also the KPCC President.

The others in the fray include Minister G Parameshwara and HK Patil, among others.

Rajanna reiterated that clarifying the issue at the earliest was important.

"Either allow Siddaramaiah to effect a Cabinet reshuffle or decide on the change of leadership at the earliest," he said.

Rajanna added that he does not have any ministerial ambitions, and would not seek the position again. He was sacked from the Cabinet last year after speaking against the party lines. —*Salar News*

Politics only for the rich: BJP MLC won't contest again

MYSURU, 7 MAY

BJP MLC H Vishwanath on Thursday announced that he will not contest any forthcoming elections henceforth, but he said he prefers to remain active in politics.

Speaking to reporters at a press conference in Mysuru, he said that his difficult for him and his family members to contest assembly elections in current electoral politics due to increasing election expenditures. He said that candidates now need a minimum of Rs 50 crore to contest elections, as money needs to be distributed to woo voters.

"It is possible only for people in real estate business to contest elections nowadays," he said. However, his sons will remain in politics depending upon their capacity, but they will also not contest assembly election, he said.

Vishwanath said there was a "blackspot" in State politics, with the State BJP unit set to conduct a 'BSY Abhimanotsava' on 9 May at Chitradurga to mark former chief minister BS Yediyurappa's 50 years in public. However, Vishwanath noted that Yediyurappa is facing POCSO case, and hence it is not wise for Union Home Minister Amit Shah to attend the function.

Similarly, the Congress government revoked the suspension of former DGP Ramachandra Rao, who Vishwanath said, received large amounts of kickbacks. He questioned whether the Home Minister is G Parameshwara or MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah was influencing the government. he said. —*Salar News*

GIRAFFE DIES AT BANNERGHATTA

Shivani, a three-year-old giraffe at the Bannerghatta Biological Park died on Thursday. According to a statement from the park, a postmorterm revealed that the giraffe died due to caecal torsion, a rare life threatening intestinal disease. She had stopped eating on 3 May, and despite the best veterinary care could not be saved. She arrived at the park last February from the Chamarajendra Zoological Gardens, in Mysuru -*SALAR*

HM: IPL final moved for commercial viability

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

Home Minister G Parameshwra said that the BCCI might have decided to shift the IPL finals venue from Bengaluru to Ahmedabad considering commercial viability, and said there was no complaint about security.

Ahmedabad will host the IPL final for a second successive season on 31 May, replacing the "originally designated" Bengaluru, the BCCI announced on Wednesday.

Parameshwara told reporters, "Unofficially, what we have learned is that (Chinnaswamy Stadium) has about 33,000 seats, and of those, about 7,000-8,000 passes or seats are blocked for VIPs, sponsors, and the teams playing the final match. Only about 25,000 passes will remain."

"Since it will not work out commercially, they might have decided to shift the match to Ahmedabad, which has a 1 lakh seat capacity... While KSCA wanted the match to happen here citing rules that the first and last matches should be held at the reigning champion's home turf, perhaps they (BCCI) made an exception," he added.

He said that free tickets to MLAs had no impact. "What difference will four passes make?" —*PTI*

Strong currents kill 2 men at Bhatkal beach

UTTARA KANNADA, 7 MAY

Two young men drowned amid strong waves at a beach in Bhatkal on Wednesday. The deceased were identified as Afroz, 34; and Rizwan, 28, natives of Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, who were working at a garments unit in Bhatkal. Police said a group of seven had gone to Nastaar Beach. While three remained on the shore, four others, including the victims, climbed onto nearby rocks. A massive wave struck the rocks, sweeping the two into the sea. Locals attempted a rescue but failed. Police visited the spot and have began an investigation.—*SALAR NEWS*

Two boys drown in rainwater-filled pit in Dharwad

DHARWAD, 7 MAY

Two seven-year-old boys drowned after in a rainwater-filled pit for house construction at Mansur village in Dharwad on Wednesday. The deceased are Kumar Ningappa Mudakannavar, and Pratham Suresh Ullagaddi. Pratham, a resident of Sattur, was visiting relatives in Mansur during the holidays. The two had to play on Wednesday evening when they accidentally fell into the pit, which had accumulated rainwater, police said. When the boys failed to return home, family and villagers launched a search operation. Their bodies werefound in the pit by villagers. Dharwad Rural Police conducted an inspection at the site.—*SALAR NEWS*

Boy drowns in pit dug for r'ly works, sparks protests

KALABURAGI, 7 MAY

Protests erupted in Konchur Diggi Tanda in Chittapur taluk after Ritesh, 13, drowned on Wednesday while swimming with friends in a rainwater-filled pit dug for railway works. Angered by the incident, villagers kept the body at the tanda for nearly seven hours, demanding compensation and action against the contractor. Officials informed them that ministers had assured compensation, but the villagers remained adamant and refused to conduct the funeral. Police took protest leader Manikanth Rathod into custody. A case was registered under Wadi Police Station. —*SALAR NEWS*

—*PTI*

Nora Fatehi apologises to NCW over dubbed song

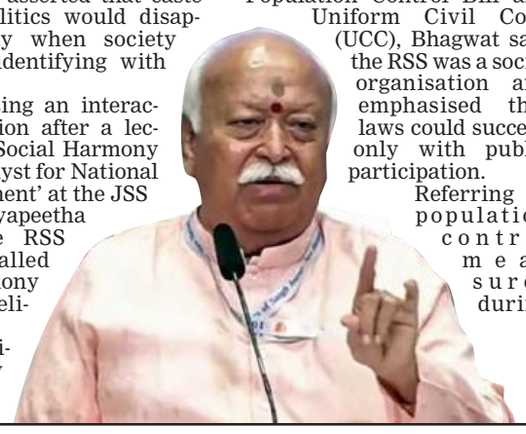
NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Actor Nora Fatehi appeared before the National Commission for Women (NCW) on Thursday regarding her controversial song 'Sarke Chunar' and issued an apology, stating there was "no intention to offend anybody." After the hearing, Fatehi explained she was put in an unintentional situation but accepted her responsibility as an artist. She said, "There was no intention to offend anybody. But of course, I have to be responsible as an artist." The NCW stated that Fatehi submitted a written apology and explained she was unaware of the objectionable message in the Hindi-dubbed version of the song.—*PTI*

NOTES EMERGENCY HORRORS

Population control, UCC need public's cooperation: Bhagwat

BENGALURU, 7 MAY



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Thursday that population control and the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code required public cooperation, and asserted that caste-based politics would disappear only when society stopped identifying with caste.

Addressing an interaction session after a lecture on 'Social Harmony as a Catalyst for National Development' at the JSS Mahavidyapeetha here the RSS chief called for harmony among religions.

"As society remembers caste, politicians use that. Their aim is to get votes. If they cannot get votes through achievements, they will get votes through caste," he said.

Replying to a question on the Population Control Bill and Uniform Civil Code (UCC), Bhagwat said the RSS was a social organisation and emphasised that laws could succeed only with public participation.

Referring to population control measures during Emergency, Bhagwat said aggressive enforcement had led to public resentment. People were forcibly dragged for sterilisation operations. That government was defeated afterwards, he said.

Demographic imbalance, women's education, empowerment and health should all be considered before formulating population policies, he said.

On the UCC, Bhagwat said some states had already moved ahead with it. Uttarakhand has already brought such a law and some other states have introduced similar measures.

"Perhaps one day it may come across India. Be patient. In democracy, everything happens slowly because 142 crore people have to decide," he added. —*PTI*

Job fair for people with disabilities to be held in Aug

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

Karnataka Minister for Skill Development Sharana Prakash R Patil announced on Thursday that an exclusive job fair for people with disabilities (PwDs) will be held in August at the Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru.

He also announced this at the launch of the "Adidvara app" -- a first-of-its-kind inclusive employment and skilling platform built with accessibility at its core -- at a ceremony in association with the AssisTech Foundation (ATF).

The Adidvara platform connects PwDs to employment opportunities, internships, and skilling and upskilling programmes, while enabling employers to post inclusive job roles and access a diverse talent pool. The Adidvara job fair, scheduled for August, will be a large-scale inclusive employment and skilling festival, and will feature direct recruitment drives, career guidance sessions, skill pathway awareness programmes, officials said. —*PTI*

Minister Sharanaprakash Patil with MLC Sudhakar Das, CEO of ATF foundation Prateek Madhav and others launching the Adidvara app at Vikasa Soudha in Bengaluru on Wednesday -*SALAR*

Cubbon walkers oppose 'commercial' mango mela

BENGALURU, 7 MAY

The Cubbon Park Walkers Association (CPWA) has strongly opposed the 'Mango Mela' scheduled to be held in the park by the Horticulture Department from Friday. In a press release, Association President S Umesh described the department's move as "fence eating the crop", wherein the guardians of the park are compromising its integrity.

The Association viewed this decision as contradictory to assurances previously given by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who had explicitly stated that the park would not be used for commercial purposes. The CPWA said the mela would lead to a surge in footfall and vehicular movement, which could disturb the park's ecosystem. The first phase of the mela will be on Friday at Cubbon Park. The event will run across various locations until 17 May, featuring 50 mango and jackfruit stalls. —*Salar News*

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₹1,445 CR SEIZED DURING POLLS

EC crackdown recorded a 40% jump in poll-related seizures across five states from ₹1,029.93 crore in 2021. Tamil Nadu leads in cash haul, West Bengal tops liquor and drug recoveries. Here are the details:

WHAT WAS SEIZED?

Category	Amt / quantity
Cash	₹155 cr
Liquor	₹183.33 cr (70 lakh litres)
Drugs	₹3,338 crore
Other freebies	Sarees, clothes, cookers, utensils and TV sets

- **Tamil Nadu** saw highest cash seizures, 48.4% more than in 2021.
- **Bengal** saw highest seizures of liquor and drugs **(worth Rs 30.28 crore).**
- There was a 68.92% rise in total seizures, the biggest jump among all states
- **Puducherry:** No drug recoveries reported

WB cops probe contract killing angle

Chandranath Rath's murder was pre-planned; report says Glock47X pistol was used

KOLKATA, 7 MAY

West Bengal Police on Thursday said the killing of BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari's close aide Chandranath Rath appeared to be a "pre-planned" murder, and investigators were probing whether contract killers had been hired for the attack.

Rath, 42, was shot dead near Doharia in North 24 Parganas district on Wednesday night while returning home to Madhyamgram from Kolkata. His driver, Buddhadeb Bera, sustained bullet injuries and remains "very critical" after undergoing surgeries at a Kolkata hospital.

"Going by the circumstantial evidence, it seems that the murder was pre-planned," a senior officer said, adding that CCTV footage from the crime scene and surrounding areas was being examined.

Rath's vehicle was intercepted around 10.15pm, nearly 100m from his housing complex. A four-wheeler allegedly blocked the car near Doharia junction before motorcycle-borne killers opened fire at close range and fled.

Police said the attackers later abandoned the small car and escaped on two motorcycles in different directions, one towards Jessore Road and another towards Rajarhat.

The number plate on the abandoned vehicle was found to be fake and linked to a tea estate employee in Siliguri. Officers said the chassis and engine numbers had also been erased. The man linked to the registration is being questioned by Mothabari police after claiming he had uploaded photographs of his car online to sell it. —*Salar News*

BJP supporters pay their last respects to Chandranath Rath as his body was taken for funeral from the the Barasat Medical College in the North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal —*PTI*

POLICE SUSPECT USE OF GLOCK47X AUSTRIAN PISTOLS

Police suspect sophisticated firearms were used in the killing of Chandranath Rath, with forensic findings indicating the assailants may have used Glock 47X pistols.

The Glock 47X MOS is a full-size 9 mm semi-automatic pistol manufactured by Austria-based Glock GmbH. While Glock pistols are used by police in India, this model in particular is described as a high-end weapon, suggesting possible involvement of professional shooters and illegal smuggling of modern, high-end firearms. A senior officer told PTI that such weapons are "generally not used by ordinary criminals". It features an optics-ready design, threaded barrel and three 17-round magazines. It is used in tactical operations.

BJP supporters staged a road blockade in Paschim Medinipur on Thursday protesting the murder of Chandranath Rath. Around 200 activists at Salboni blocked an arterial road with burning tyres, alleging a TMC conspiracy. The protest lasted about 30 minutes before police persuaded them to disperse —*PTI*

SP Chief Akhilesh Yadav met TMC supremo Mamata on Thursday. He told her, "Didi, you have not lost" and alleged "election fraud" and "multi-layered mafiagiri" by the BJP and the ECI. —*PTI*

KILLED AS HE WAS MY PA: SUVENDU

KOLKATA, 7 MAY

BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari on Thursday claimed that his personal assistant Chandranath Rath might not have been killed had he not worked for him, alleging that "contract killers" were involved in the attack.

Speaking to reporters at Barasat State General Hospital after Rath's post-mortem, Adhikari said Rath had no enmities and was targeted due to his proximity to him. Rath's body was later taken to his native Chandipur in Purba Medinipur for the last rites.

"Five bullets were fired at him to ensure his death," Adhikari said. He also alleged that police were capable of solving the case but were previously "not allowed" to act freely, in a veiled attack on TMC. Responding to demands for a CBI probe, he said, "Police will be able to solve this." Rath, originally from Chandipur in Purba Medinipur, served nearly two decades in the IAF after studying at Rahara Ramakrishna Mission. He later worked briefly in the corporate sector.

His mom Hasi Rath was earlier associated with TMC and held a post in a local panchayat body. She worked closely with Suvendu for two decades, including during the period when Adhikari was a TMC minister. Both he and his mom later shifted to BJP Adhikari in 2020. Rath became a key aide handling logistics, coordination, and campaign management, and was part of Suvendu Adhikari's inner circle during his high-stakes electoral battles, including the one in Bhabanipur seat. —*PTI*

BJP says TMC goons impersonating its workers

It has come to our notice that elements of the Trinamool's so-called 'Gunda Vahini' are attempting to impersonate BJP workers to mislead people and create disorder. The BJP will not tolerate such deception. Anyone found engaging in impersonation, intimidation, or taking the law into their own hands will face strict legal consequences. -BJP

'MY SON'S MURDER IS REVENGE'

KOLKATA, 7 MAY

Alleging "revenge for Mamata defeat in Bhabanipur," Chandranath Rath's mother Hasi rani Rath said on Thursday that her son's killing was politically driven and demanded lifers for those responsible.

Pointing to statements of TMC leaders during the campaign claiming that while Adhikari was appealing for peaceful voting, the TMC was declaring that after the 4 May results, "no leader from Delhi would be able to save BJP workers". "They proved it right," she alleged. —*PTI*

I would not have been in so much pain had he died in an accident. He was responsible for the Nandigram and Bhabanipur elections, and that is why he was targeted

-Hasirani Rath, the mother of Chandranath Rath

—*PTI*

Assam to hold swearing-in function on 12 May

GUWAHATI, 7 MAY

The swearing-in of the newly elected BJP-led NDA government in Assam will take place on 12 May, Chief Secretary Ravi Kota announced. The event is scheduled at the Veterinary Field, Khanapara, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, union ministers, chief ministers, deputy CMs of BJP-ruled states, and industry representatives expected to attend.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma submitted his resignation to Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, who asked him to continue as caretaker. BJP's alliance secured 102 of 126 seats, with the BJP winning 82, and allies BPF and AGP claiming 10 each. —*PTI*

MCC no longer in operation, declares ECI

T'PURAM, 7 MAY

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC), which came into force on 15 March ahead of the Assembly elections, has ceased to operate in four states and several constituencies following the declaration of results, the Election Commission (EC) announced on Thursday. The MCC remains in force only in West Bengal's Falta assembly constituency, where polling is pending. The EC clarified that MCC has ended after the results of elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Puducherry, as well as bye-elections in Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Nagaland, and Tripura, were declared. The EC stated in a letter to chief secretaries and Chief Electoral Officers that the MCC shall continue in Falta due to the ordered fresh poll. The elections were held on 9, 23, and 29 April, with results declared on 4 May. —*PTI*

Ex-minister of Rajasthan held in Rs 900 cr JJM scam

JAIPUR, 7 MAY

Rajasthan's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) arrested former Minister Mahesh Joshi from his Jaipur residence in connection with the Rs 900-crore Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) scam. The arrest followed the detention of retired IAS officer Subodh Agarwal a month earlier. Joshi, former Public Health Engineering Department minister, was produced in court and remanded to custody till 11 May. He was arrested by the ED in April 2025 on money laundering charges and was granted bail in December. The ACB's SIT detained Joshi for misuse of powers and accepting bribes for tenders. —*PTI*

AICC observers meet Congress MLAs to pick next Kerala CM

Congress leaders VD Satheesan, Ramesh Chennithala and AICC secretary Mansoor Ali Khan attended the CLP meeting in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday —*SALAR*

T'PURAM, 7 MAY

Amid a triangular contest for the Chief Minister's post in Congress' Kerala unit, AICC observers Mukul Wasnik and Ajay Maken held consultations on Thursday with party MLAs to seek their opinions on selecting the next CM.

The CLP passed a resolution authorising its high command to decide the CM, party sources said here.

Congress leaders VD Satheesan, Ramesh Chennithala and AICC general secretary KC Venugopal are being considered for the CM post.

DECISION BY SUNDAY

The next chief minister of Kerala will possibly be finalised by Sunday after Congress MLAs conveyed their views to AICC observers after the CLP meeting here on Thursday.

Senior Congress leader K Muraleedharan, who won from Vattiyoorkavu, told reporters that the decision would be taken by Sunday.

THOMAS FOR SATHEESAN

Senior politician KV Thomas, who was expelled from the Congress in 2022, said on Thursday said that VD Satheesan was the best man to be CM, as since 2021, he had led the UDF as the opposition leader.

Thomas, speaking to a TV channel, said that public opinion backed Satheesan.

ASSEMBLY DISSOLVED

Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar has dissolved the state's 15th Assembly, according to a gazette notification issued on Thursday.

IUML CLARIFICATION

Senior IUML leader PMA Salam on Thursday said the party has not sought the post of Deputy Chief Minister.

Salam, the general secretary of the IUML state committee, said that if the topic arises in discussions within the UDF, the party will indicate its stand. — *Salar News*

KEC (M) denies crisis, no merger with KEC (J)

Kerala Congress (M) chairman Jose K Mani denied there was any crisis in the party after its defeat and ruled out a merger with the Kerala Congress (J) faction.

Mani was speaking to reporters here after attending a meeting of LDF allies. The LDF could secure only 35 seats, while Kerala Congress (Mani) failed to win any seat.

Kerala Congress (Joseph) chairman PJ Joseph said on Thursday that his party wants at least two ministerial berths. — *PTI*

Vijayan accepts mandate against LDF

Former chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan said on Thursday that he accepted the people's verdict and congratulated the UDF on its victory.

He said the LDF"s defeat was unexpected and that the LDF will exert pressure on the new government to implement welfare measures. — *PTI*

Observers see no possibility of a DMK-AIADMK alliance

CHENNAI, 7 MAY

Reports suggesting a possible alliance between the DMK and AIADMK to form a government in Tamil Nadu by overtaking actor-turned-politician Vijay's TVK, which has 108 MLAs, have been dismissed as "mere speculation" by political observers.

Former AIADMK MP PKC Palanisamy questioned the feasibility of such a tie-up, saying, "Do you think it is possible?" He added that even if an alliance were considered, allocating ministerial posts and deciding the chief minister's position would be highly contentious. He also said several leaders in both parties would not accept such a move.

Senior political critic Satyalaya Ramakrishnan said there had been no discussions between the two parties' leadership. "How come the media could circulate this?" he asked, calling it speculation. A senior DMK functionary, V Madhivanan, also ruled out any understanding, saying senior leaders would not accept it.

AIADMK leader K Villvam pointed out that ideological differences between the DMK and AIADMK make any alliance unlikely, recalling a failed attempt to bring together party founders M G Ramachandran and M Karunanidhi. "Even if such a tie-up happens, it will not last even a week," he said.

Meanwhile, reports claimed that around 15 to 40 AIADMK MLAs have been moved to luxury resorts in Puducherry, including Shore Thrishvam, amid allegations that some MLAs favour an alliance with TVK. However, no official confirmation has been made. —*Salar News*

Vijay said no to CM's police convoy: TVK

TVK Chief Vijay declined to accept police convoy vehicles provided to him as Chief Minister-designate, the party said on Thursday. A police official confirmed that the vehicles and security, allotted "as per protocol" after election results, were returned. Four convoy vehicles assigned on 5 May, after TVK won, were sent back. On 6 May, he also used a private vehicle to meet Governor Arlekar. Metal detector gates were also removed from the actor's residence. —*PTI*

TVK supporters disappointed after oath event cancelled

Hundreds of TVK supporters gathered at Chennai's Nehru Indoor Stadium on Thursday expecting party chief Vijay to take oath as Chief Minister, only to find locked gates and no official communication, leaving many disappointed and confused.

Fans travelled from across Tamil Nadu, including Coimbatore and Arumbakkam, arriving early based on social media and news reports. Several expressed heartbreak, saying they believed a formal ceremony or declaration was scheduled.

Supporters said their faith in Vijay stemmed from his self-funded campaign and welfare promises. Some had waited for hours, while others said they came after hearing announcements from family and social media. No official event took place. — PTI

NEW TEAM IN BIHAR

Nitish's son, 31 others sworn in as ministers

PATNA, 7 MAY

In a major expansion of the Cabinet of Bihar's first BJP-led government, 32 leaders, including JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar's son Nishant Kumar, were sworn in as ministers on Thursday in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Governor Lt Gen (Retd) Syed Ata Hasnain administered the oath of office at a grand ceremony.

The new ministers are drawn from all constituents of the five-party NDA in the state. The BJP, the single largest party in the 243-member Assembly with 89 MLAs, has 15 ministers in the expanded cabinet.

Most of the inductees had earlier been part of the Nitish Kumar-led cabinet formed in November last year after the NDA returned to power in the Assembly polls.

The JD(U) is represented by 15 ministers, with 13 taking oath on Thursday. Two JD(U) leaders — Vijay Kumar Chaudhary and Bijendra Prasad Yadav — had earlier been sworn in along with Samrat Choudhary and were designated as Deputy Chief Ministers. From NDA allies, Sanjay Kumar Singh and Sanjay Kumar Paswan of Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) were inducted, while Santosh Kumar Suman and Deepak Prakash, sons of Union ministers Jitan Ram Manjhi and Upendra Kushwaha respectively, also took oath. —*PTI*

JD(U) leaders Shravan Kumar and Nishant Kumar, BJP leader Vijay Kumar Sinha and others take oath as ministers in Patna on Thursday —*PTI*

BJP accuses Rahul of double standards on SIR

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

The BJP criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday, accusing him of "double standards" following remarks by a Kerala Congress MLA praising the SIR process for removing fake voters. BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla stated that Congress MLA Mathew Kuzhalnadan had "exposed" Gandhi's "lies" on SIR.

Poonawalla claimed that Kuzhalnadan said SIR was beneficial because it eliminated fake voters created by the Left, which helped Congress. He shared a video clip of Kuzhalnadan saying that the "SIR process removed a lot of fake voters" in constituencies managed by CPM, aiding Congress. Poonawalla accused Gandhi of electoral opportunism, suggesting he was making "hit-and-run allegations" to cover his "99th defeat".

He further alleged that Rahul Gandhi's stance on SIR varied across states, praising it in Kerala and Tamil Nadu but blaming it in Bengal.

The BJP spokesperson highlighted the Congress-led victory in Kerala's recent Assembly elections, where the Congress-led alliance won 102 seats out of 140. —*PTI*

—INSTAGRAM

HC bans entry of casino boat in Goa post protests

PANAJI, 7 MAY

The Bombay High Court has barred Deltin's new casino boat from entering Goa's Mandovi river, stating it must obtain necessary certifications and court approval before sailing into the Panaji port. Justice Valmiki Menezes and Justice Amit S Jamsandekar issued the interim order on 6 May, following a petition by Libia Lobo Sardesai, Uday Bhembre, and others of the 'Enough Is Enough Movement' and public protests. The petitioners argued that the new vessel is larger than the old one. The court ordered the vessel not to sail into Panaji port without required certificates or prior court permission. The Goa government was asked to seek court approval before permitting the vessel's operation. —*PTI*

Charas packets worth crores found in Kutch & Dwarka

BHUJ, 7 MAY

Police recovered large quantities of charas valued in crores of rupees in Gujarat's Kutch and Devbhumi Dwarka districts. The 176 Battalion of the Border Security Force found ten packets during patrolling in Kutch's creek area on Wednesday. In the past week, over 40 packets have been seized from the coastal region, given its sensitive border with Pakistan. Charas, a cannabis resin, is banned under India's NDPS Act. Additionally, police found 4kg of charas worth Rs 2.3 crore near Kalyanpur in Devbhumi Dwarka. A First Information Report was lodged against the smugglers who are suspected to have dumped the packets fearing interception by security forces. —*PTI*

—ANI

WB film industry protests for leadership change

KOLKATA, 7 MAY

A section of Bengali film producers and distributors protested against EIMPA chairperson Pia Sengupta, demanding her resignation and a new screening committee. The protesters gathered at the EIMPA office on 4 and 5 May, demanding transparency. They accused Sengupta of refusing to meet stakeholders, despite her claims of political neutrality. A meeting is scheduled for 8 May, but protests continued, with personnel from Bowbazar police and Central forces present after Sengupta lodged a complaint to ensure her safety. "Both sides will meet on 8 May, and we will discuss all our demands," said Saha. —*PTI*

Teacher's husband fires at school, injures man

JAIPUR, 7 MAY

A man was injured after a teacher's husband reportedly opened fire at a government school in Karauli district. The incident occurred at Todabhim primary school following a dispute over leave. SHO Sunil Lal said, "Bhim Singh arrived with two others and got into an argument with a senior teacher. During the altercation, he allegedly fired with a country-made pistol." The senior teacher escaped unharmed, but a nearby man was injured and taken to hospital, where he is out of danger. The injured man was present during the incident, which took place on the school's periphery. Priya Prajapat, her husband, and associates fled the scene. The police are investigating the matter. —*PTI*

Year after Sindoor, J&K's Simari fights for normalcy

Routine life has resumed here but outsiders face distrust

SIMARI, 7 MAY

A river runs through it, dividing the village between India on one side of the gushing waters and PoK on the other. If Operation Sindoor has a ground zero, it is Simari where the sound of artillery fire still echoes for villagers trying to shake off memories from that night one year ago.

It is from this frontier village surrounded by high mountains that the Army fired shells across the Krishan Ganga River to signal the start of Operation Sindoor on the night of 6 May 2025 as India's response to the terror attack in Pahalgam.

One year on, silence seems to have settled over the hamlet on the foothills of the Shamshabari mountains in the Tangdhar sector, about 180 km from Srinagar. Life has resumed its everyday routine but outsiders are met with quiet distrust. Many walk away, saying they understand only Pahari.

Simari has a population of 500 and just 80 houses. There are a dozen odd modern concrete structures alongside traditional mud and timber dwellings. If it were not for the roaring river, people from one side to the other could literally shout out to the other side.

The river is also a constant reminder that this is a divided land. Operation Sindoor was felt here as a storm of fire passing overhead.

Ghulam Qadir is amongst the few who talks, albeit reluctantly "We didn't just hear the about the war... we felt it as shells lit the skies," Qadir told PTI. Community bunkers were home for some days after that first night of shelling.

He is proud that Simari's middle school has been designated Polling Booth Number One. A slogan greets visitors with the declaration, 'Democracy starts from here'.

The school is sign of Simari's resilience. Despite being physically separated from the rest of the country by a security fence, people here view themselves as the primary guardians of the country's democracy. The village is dependent on army troops and many work as labourers for them. — *PTI*

It is from the village of Simari that the Army fired shells across the Krishan Ganga River signalling the beginning of Operation Sindoor on the night of 6 May 2025 as India's response to the terror attack in Pahalgam. Kashmir. After a year, silence has settled over the hamlet on the foothills of the Shamshabari mountains in the Tangdhar sector—***SCREENGRAB***

> **No sanctuary across the Line of Control is safe. We will hit everything. We will go after everything and that has been made clear in the new normal that the prime minister referred to last year. But the conditions, the timing and the method will be ours**
>
> — Indian military

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Questioning religions will break civilisations, says SC

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

The Supreme Court said that if individuals start questioning religious practices or matters of religion before a constitutional court then there will be hundreds of petitions questioning different rituals, leading to the breaking down of religions and civilisation.

The Constitution bench is hearing petitions about discrimination against women at religious places, and on the scope of religious freedom practised by religions.

The Central Board of the Dawoodi Bohra Community filed a PIL in 1986 seeking the setting aside of a 1962 judgment, which had struck down the Bombay Prevention of Excommuni cation Act, 1949. This law made excommunication of any member illegal.

The 1962 Constitution bench judgment said, "It is evident from the religious faith and tenets of the Dawoodi Bohra community that the exercise of the power of excommunication by its religious head on religious grounds formed part of the management of its religious affairs and the 1949 Act making excommunication invalid, infringed the right of the community under Article 26(b)."

Senior advocate Raju Ramachandran, representing reformist Dawoodi Bohras, submitted that a practice which is conducted in response to secular and social actions of an individual do not deserve protection under Article 25 and consequently cannot be a 'matter of religion' under Article 26 of the Constitution.

Ramachandran said that a practice which may have a religious aspect but also adversely impacts fundamental rights is not immune to restriction under Article 25. — *PTI*

PEACE PRIZE

Haji Syed Salman Chishty, the Chairman of the Chishty Foundation, was awarded the BRICS Global Peace Ambassador Award 2026 for his work in spiritual diplomacy, interfaith dialogue and humanitarian service in 75 countries —***Salar News***

Sohrabuddin's kin had filed appeal in HC

MUMBAI, 7 MAY

In April 2019, Sohrabuddin Shaikh's brothers had filed an appeal in the high court. The prosecuting agency, CBI, told the HC last year that it had accepted the acquittal judgment and was not going to appeal.

Sohrabuddin was killed in November 2005 in an alleged fake encounter near Ahmedabad by the Gujarat police. His wife, Kausar Bi, was also killed a few days later, as per the CBI.

A year later, in December 2006, Prajapati, considered a key eyewitness, was killed in another alleged encounter.

The probe in the case was handed over to the CBI by the Supreme Court, and the trial was shifted to Mumbai.

Sohrabuddin's brothers claimed in the appeal that the trial was flawed and cited instances where witnesses later claimed that their testimonies were not accurately recorded by the trial court.

The appeal sought that the judgment be quashed and a retrial be held in the case.

Shaikh, his wife and aide, who were returning to Sangli in Maharashtra from Hyderabad in a bus, were taken into custody by a police team on the night of 22 November 2005. The couple was taken in one vehicle and Prajapati in another.

The CBI said Shaikh was killed on 26 November 2005, allegedly by a joint team of Gujarat and Rajasthan police, and Kausar Bi three days later.Prajapati, who was lodged in an Udaipur central jail, was killed in an encounter on the Gujarat-Rajasthan border on 27 December 2006.

Amit Shah was the Minister of State for Home in Gujarat when the incident occurred. The CBI alleged he was the mastermind behind the conspiracy to eliminate Sheikh due to motives including extortion. Shah was arrested by the CBI in July 2010 and charged with murder, kidnapping, and extortion. He spent over three months in Sabarmati Jail and was granted bail by the Gujarat HC, which was upheld by the SC on condition that he stays out of Gujarat. In December 2014, a CBI court discharged Shah, ruling that the evidence was insufficient. The court said the CBI's case appeared to be politically driven. — *PTI*

Chugh sues Punjab CM for blaming BJP for blasts

CHANDIGARH, 7 MAY

BJP general secretary Tarun Chugh on Thursday served a legal notice of defamation on Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann for his remarks blaming the BJP for the twin blasts in Jalandhar and Amritsar and asked him to either provide proof for his claim or resign.

Two explosions near security establishments rocked Punjab on Tuesday night, drawing condemnation from opposition parties, which targeted the Bhagwant Mann government over the law and order issue.

Mann on Wednesday held the BJP responsible for the two blasts, alleging this was how the party was preparing for the assembly elections in the state.

The first explosion occurred at around 8 pm in Jalandhar outside the headquarters of the BSF's Punjab frontier, while the second blast occurred at around 11 pm near the Army camp in Amritsar's Khasa.

Slamming the CM, BJP leader Chugh said on Thursday that Mann has completely "undermined" the dignity of the Chief Minister's office by accusing the BJP of involvement in bomb blasts without presenting any evidence.

- Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said on Wednesday that the BJP was responsible for the two bomb blasts, adding that this is how the party was preparing for the upcoming Assembly elections in the border state

"Mann's statement contradicts his DGP's position. While the Punjab Police is pointing towards the involvement of the ISI and foreign networks, the chief minister remains busy pursuing his political agenda," he asked. — *PTI*

ED raids 'aide' of Punjab CM's OSD, others in 'fraud' case

CHANDIGARH, 7 MAY

The ED on Thursday searched many locations in Punjab and Chandigarh, including the premises of an alleged close associate of an OSD in the CMO in connection with a money laundering probe into an alleged land fraud case, officials said.

They said about a dozen locations in Mohali and Chandigarh linked to Suntec City Project, Ajay Sehgal, ABS Townships, Altus Builders, Dhir Constructions and associates are being searched. A person named Nitin Gohal is also being searched by the ED and he is alleged to have "helped" the builders who "defaulted" in payments to the Greater Mohali Area Development Authority (GMADA) for them, ED said.

ED officials said Gohal, an IT professional, was linked to Rajbir Ghuman, Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to Punjab Chief Minister Mann. — PTI

Ex-CJI Chandrachud appointed mediator in Kapur family row

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

The Supreme Court appointed former CJI DY Chandrachud to act as a mediator in the dispute between late industrialist Sunjay Kapur's mother Rani Kapur and his wife Priya Kapur over the family trust.

Asking the parties to participate in the mediation proceedings with an open mind, the SC said they must not make any public statements and also not go on social media about the dispute. The bench observed that having regard to the nature of the dispute, it had suggested on 27 April that the parties should consider going for mediation. "Today, the counsels appearing for the parties have agreed to go for mediation. So we appoint DY Chandrachud as the mediator," the bench said.

On April 27, the SC sought a response from Priya Kapur and others on a lawsuit by Sanjay Kapur's mother seeking directions to declare the family trust "null and void." The bench had issued notice to Priya Kapur and others on the plea filed by the 80-year-old Rani Kapur alleging that the trust, which was constituted in her name in October 2017, was a product of "fabricated and fraudulent" documents. — *PTI*

Students protest 'unlawful entity' tag on J&K school

SRINAGAR, 7 MAY

Students and teachers at Dar Ul Uloom Jamia Siraj Ul Uloom in Shopian district staged a protest against the government's decision to declare it an unlawful entity under UAPA. The march from the institute to the Deputy Commissioner's office carried placards saying "save our future" and "open our school." The protestors demanded revocation of the notification.

Divisional Commissioner Anshul Garg issued an order on 24 April based on a dossier by the SSP, citing illegal activities and "credible evidence on record" indicating links with Jamaat-e-Islami. —*PTI*

Rate poison found in watermelon that killed 4

MUMBAI, 7 MAY

Four members of a family in Pydhonie area of south Mumbai died last month due to rat poison, police officials said on Thursday.

The Forensic Science Laboratory report confirmed the presence of zinc phosphide in viscera (liver, kidney, spleen), stomach contents, bile, and abdominal fat samples of the deceased - Abdulla Dokadia, 44, his wife Nasrin, 35, and their daughters Aayesha, 16, and Zaineb, 13, said Deputy Commissioner of Police Pravin Mundhe.

"The watermelon sample also tested positive for zinc phosphide, while all other food items were negative. The report will be studied in depth," the DCP said.

Zinc phosphide is used primarily as a highly toxic acute rodenticide to control rats and mice.

The Dokadia family had hosted a get-together of relatives on 25 April. Around 1am, hours after the guests had left, they ate watermelon. They suffered severe bouts of vomiting and diarrhoea on 26 April and were rushed to a hospital, where all four died during treatment. —*PTI*

ANOTHER WOMAN DIES AFTER C-SECTION AT KOTA GOVT HOSPITAL

KOTA, 7 MAY

Another woman, who contracted infection after a C-section at the New Medical College Hospital (NMCH) here, died on Thursday, officials said.

The condition of the four other infected women remains critical, and the process has been initiated to shift them to a higher medical facility in Jaipur, they added.

At least six women developed complications following caesareans at the hospital on Monday, and one of them died during treatment the next morning.

Jyoti Nayak, 19, a resident of Kota, succumbed to the infection during treatment on Thursday, Additional Superintendent, NMCH Kota, Dr RP Meena said.

Jyoti's condition had been most critical since the five infected women were shifted to the nephrology ward on Tuesday, and when her condition worsened on Thursday, she was put on ventilation. However, she died at around 10.30 am, Dr Meena said.

The condition of the remaining four infected women is critical with severe kidney failure. A source said preparations are underway to take them to a higher medical centre in Jaipur.

Dr Meena said it was Jyoti's first delivery, and her child, as well as the four other infants are in sound health.

Meanwhile, the family of Jyoti refused to take her body and held protests inside the medical college premises. Congress workers were also present with her husband Ravi.

The Kota administration has constituted committees to probe the matter. — *PTI*

GOVT SCHOOLS AFFECTED

Paper shortage hits printing of textbook covers in Kerala

KOCHI, 7 MAY

A senior INTUC leader and president of the Kerala Books and Publications Society (KBPS) staff and employees union said on Thursday that books may not be available on time for students of government schools due to lack of paper.

KK Ibrahimkutty, the president of the KBPS employees union, told a TV channel here that then General Education Minister V Sivankutty had said a month before the elections that books for all state-run schools would be distributed before they closed at the end of the 2025-26 academic year.

"At that time only 20 per cent of books were ready. With three weeks left for the opening of schools, only 70 per cent have been completed, but their binding is on hold due to lack of paper to print front covers," Ibrahimkutty claimed.

He said that even if the paper comes, it would be difficult to provide books by the time schools reopen, he said.

When the new government comes, it will face a burden of over Rs 300 crore in connection with this, Ibrahimkutty contended. He also alleged that in the last five years, the Left government had not been able to provide books on time to students. —*PTI*

BJP leaders Suvendu Adhikari and Samik Bhattacharya arrive amid investigation into the killing of the former's close aide Chandranath Rath, at Barasat Medical College, in North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal; shattered window of Rath's car after the attack; Rath's family is inconsolable —*PTI*

Suvendu aide's killing fuels fears of spiralling violence

KOLKATA, 7 MAY

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) officials investigate the crime scene following the killing of for IAF officer Chandranath Rath, at Madhyamgram, in North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal —*PTI*

Barely 48 hours after the West Bengal assembly elections delivered a verdict for a regime change, the killing of senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari's close aide has pushed the state into a politically combustible phase, where post-poll violence threatens to overshadow the democratic transition.

What began as sporadic incidents of clashes after the BJP's historic victory has now rapidly acquired the contours of a larger confrontation marked by fear, revenge narratives and a battle for territorial dominance across politically sensitive districts.

For the BJP, preparing to form its first government in Bengal, the murder is both a challenge and a political opportunity.

The challenge lies in preventing retaliatory violence by an emotionally charged cadre base. The opportunity lies in reinforcing the saffron camp's long-standing allegation that Bengal's political culture under the TMC rule was sustained through intimidation, targeted attacks and entrenched local power networks.

Calling the killing a "pre-planned murder", Adhikari alleged that his close aide Chandranath Rath had been tracked for days before being shot dead in Madhyamgram.

"This is heart-wrenching. They followed him and executed him," Adhikari reportedly told party workers after reaching the hospital late on Wednesday night, while simultaneously appealing to supporters not to "take the law into their own hands".

That appeal itself reflected the scale of concern within the BJP leadership.

Within hours of the killing, anger spread rapidly through the party's organisational network in districts, particularly in North 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur, where Adhikari commands considerable influence.

Senior BJP leaders privately admitted fears that the murder could trigger spontaneous retaliation if not politically contained.

"This is not an isolated murder. This is political terrorism," a BJP leader said, accusing the "old ecosystem" of trying to create fear.

Rath was not a peripheral worker but someone deeply involved in the BJP's election machinery and closely associated with Adhikari, the party's principal strategist in Bengal and its most combative anti-TMC face.

An attack on someone from his inner circle instantly raises the political stakes.

Political analysts said Bengal's post-election violence has historically followed a recognisable pattern - isolated attacks escalating into cycles of reprisals, territorial assertion and political signalling.

"This is the most sensitive phase in Bengal politics - the period between the fall of one regime and the consolidation of another. Every violent incident during this phase acquires symbolic value," political analyst Subhomoy Moitra said.

Reports of attacks on party offices, vandalism, intimidation and clashes have surfaced from several districts. The killing in Madhyamgram is likely to intensify insecurity among grassroots workers and deepen polarisation in districts such as North 24 Parganas, Nadia, Hooghly and Purba Medinipur, where political loyalties have shifted sharply in recent years.

"The danger is that violence becomes self-sustaining. Every attack produces another justification for retaliation," an analyst said.

The BJP is already seeking to project the incident not merely as a criminal act but as evidence that sections of the outgoing ruling ecosystem are unwilling to accept the transfer of power.

The killing may also strengthen voices within the BJP advocating swift police reshuffles, tighter security measures and aggressive crackdowns in politically volatile belts immediately after the swearing-in ceremony.

"The message from the BJP is clear; they want to portray this as the last resistance of a collapsing order," a political observer remarked.

BJP LEADERSHIP FACES A DELICATE BALANCING ACT

While publicly adopting a muscular posture, the party is aware that uncontrolled retaliation by local cadre networks could deepen instability before the new administration formally takes charge.

For the TMC, the episode presents a dangerous political trap.

The party condemned the killing and demanded a court-monitored CBI probe, while simultaneously alleging that several of its workers were attacked in post-poll clashes.

However, the optics remain politically damaging because the BJP has successfully consolidated a narrative of victimhood around the murder. This is particularly problematic for the TMC at a moment when it is already battling perceptions of organisational erosion following its defeat.

The incident has also sharpened the personal political battle between Adhikari and the TMC leadership. Over the years, Adhikari has fashioned himself as the BJP's principal street fighter in Bengal politics, building his image through relentless confrontation with TMC.

The killing of a close aide is likely to further harden that posture and intensify the BJP's political messaging in the days ahead.

In deeply polarised states, political murders rarely remain isolated crimes. They become emotional triggers, organisational signals and rallying points for mobilisation. —*PTI*

SALAR ساہر

11-yr-old warrior served troops during Sindoor

What began as a simple act of kindness by an 11-year-old boy during Operation Sindoor has become a powerful symbol of patriotism and resilience in Punjab's border belt, even as another family in the region continues to grapple with the trauma of losing loved ones in cross-border hostilities.

Shavan Singh, a resident of Taranwali village in Punjab's Ferozepur district, won national recognition after voluntarily serving Indian Army personnel deployed along the Indo-Pak border during heightened tensions with Pakistan last year.

At the height of the operation, Shavan regularly carried tea, water, milk and lassi from his home to troops stationed in the village. Despite intense heat, drone threats and fears of shelling, the young boy continued visiting Army camps to support soldiers on the frontline.

"When Operation Sindoor started, soldiers came to our village. I felt I should serve them because they were fighting for us," Shavan said on the anniversary of the operation.

With his cheerful smile and quiet determination, the boy soon became a familiar and admired figure among the troops. "I never expected to be honoured for it," he said.

His father, Sona Singh, said the family never imagined the recognition their son would receive.

"We are extremely thankful to the Indian Army for encouraging him and recognising his contribution. We never imagined that our son would one day receive an award from the President of India and even get an opportunity to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

In recognition of his efforts, the Army's Golden Arrow Division honoured Shavan with the title of "Youngest Civilian Warrior". Last July, the Army also announced sponsorship of his education to ensure financial difficulties would not stand in the way of his dream of joining the armed forces.

In December last year, Shavan received the "Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar" from President Droupadi Murmu at a ceremony in New Delhi.

While Shavan's story reflects courage and hope, another family in Ferozepur continues to live with the scars of the conflict.

Nearly a year after a drone explosion devastated Khai Pheme Ki village on the outskirts of Ferozepur, the damaged house and burnt vehicle belonging to Jaswant Singh's family remain untouched, grim reminders of the tragedy that claimed both his parents.

On 9 May last year, debris from a Pakistani drone, intercepted mid-air by the Indian Army's air defence system, crashed into the family's home and triggered an explosion.

Jaswant's mother, Sukhwinder Kaur, 50, died during treatment on 12 May, while his father, Lakhwinder Singh, 57, succumbed to injuries on 1 July after battling for life for nearly 50 days at a private hospital in Ludhiana.

Jaswant, who was also injured in the blast, now lives with relatives in Wariam Singh Wala village in the Mamdot block. Family members say the psychological impact of the incident continues to weigh heavily on him.

"The money cannot compensate for human life. Jaswant has been shattered after losing his parents. Whenever he goes near the house, the memories return," his uncle, Gurbachan Singh, told PTI.

The Punjab government provided Rs 20 lakh compensation to Jaswant, the sole surviving member of the family, while the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee gave Rs 5 lakh. The family has also urged the state government to provide him with employment.

Operation Sindoor was launched after the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack. In the early hours of 7 May last year, Indian armed forces carried out missile strikes on nine terror targets in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, including Jaish-e-Mohammad's stronghold in Bahawalpur and Lashkar-e-Taiba's base in Muridke.

In the days that followed, Pakistan attempted attacks on Indian military bases on 8, 9 and 10 May. Indian forces successfully thwarted the attempts and retaliated by damaging several Pakistani military installations, including air bases, radar systems, command centres and air defence infrastructure.

One year later, stories from Punjab's border villages continue to reflect both the extraordinary courage of ordinary citizens and the enduring human cost of conflict. —*PTI*

Shravan Singh being felicitated for his support to soldiers during Operation Sindoor —*X/MAJOR_MADHAN*

- "When Operation Sindoor started, soldiers came to our village. I felt I should serve them because they were fighting for us," Shavan said on the anniversary of Operation Sindoor. With his cheerful smile and quiet determination, the boy soon became a familiar and admired figure among the troops. "I never expected to be honoured for it," he said

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Hantavirus outbreak on cruise ship raises alarm

A rodent-borne illness is suspected of causing an outbreak aboard a cruise ship that has killed three people and sickened others.

Studies indicate hantaviruses have been around for centuries, with outbreaks documented in Asia and Europe. In the Eastern Hemisphere, it has been linked with hemorrhagic fever and kidney failure. It wasn't until the early 1990s that a previously unknown group of hantaviruses emerged in the southwestern United States as the cause of an acute respiratory disease now known as hantavirus pulmonary syndrome.

The disease gained attention last year after the late actor Gene Hackman's wife, Betsy Arakawa, died from a hantavirus infection in New Mexico.

The World Health Organisation said in a statement on Sunday that detailed investigations of the cruise ship outbreak are ongoing, including further laboratory testing and epidemiological investi gations. Sequencing of the virus is also ongoing.

Health workers in protective gear evacuate patients from the MV Hondius cruise ship at a port in Praia, Cape Verde, Wednesday —*PTI*

THE VIRUS IS SPREAD BY RODENTS, RARELY PEOPLE

Hantavirus is mainly spread by contact with rodents or their urine, saliva or droppings, particularly when the material is disturbed and becomes airborne, posing a risk of inhalation. People are typically exposed to hantavirus around their homes, cabins or sheds, especially when cleaning out enclosed spaces with little ventilation or exploring areas where there are mouse droppings.

The WHO says that while it rarely happens, hantaviruses can also spread directly between people.

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention began tracking the virus after a 1993 outbreak in the Four Corners region — the area where Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah meet.

It was an astute physician with the Indian Health Service who first noticed a pattern of deaths among young patients, said Michelle Harkins, a pulmonologist with the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Centre who for years has been studying the disease and helping patients.

Most US cases are in Western states. New Mexico and Arizona are hotspots, Harkins said, likely because the odds are greater for mouse-human encounters in rural areas.

THE ILLNESS STARTS WITH FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS

An infection can rapidly progress and become life-threatening. Experts say it can start with symptoms that include a fever, chills, muscle aches and maybe a headache.

"Early in the illness, you really may not be able to tell the difference between hantavirus and having the flu," said Dr Sonja Bartolome of UT Southwestern Medical Centre in Dallas.

Symptoms of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome usually show between one and eight weeks after contact with an infected rodent. As the infection progresses, patients might experience tightness in the chest as the lungs fill with fluid.

The other syndrome caused by hantavirus — hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome — usually develops within a week or two after exposure.

Death rates vary depending on which hantavirus causes the illness. Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome is fatal in about 35 per cent of people infected, while the death rate for hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome varies from 1 per cent to 15 per cent of patients, according to the CDC.

MANY UNKNOWNS ABOUT THE ILLNESS AND TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment or cure, but early medical attention can increase the chance of survival.

Despite years of research, Harkins said many questions have yet to be answered, including why it can be mild for some people and very severe for others and how antibodies are developed. She and other researchers have been following patients over long periods of time in hopes of finding a treatment.

"A lot of mysteries," she said, noting that what researchers do know is that rodent exposure is a key.

The best way to avoid the germ is to minimise contact with rodents and their droppings. Use protective gloves and a bleach solution for cleaning up rodent droppings. Public health experts caution against sweeping or vacuuming, which can cause the virus to get into the air. —*PTI*

- It wasn't until the early 1990s that a previously unknown group of hantaviruses emerged in the southwestern United States as the cause of an acute respiratory disease now known as hantavirus pulmonary syndrome. The disease gained attention last year after the late actor Gene Hackman's wife, Betsy Arakawa, died from a hantavirus infection in New Mexico.

Iran says reviewing ceasefire proposal

Trump says deal 'very possible'; Speaker calls proposal 'faux' as Iran Prez meets Mojtaba

WASHINGTON, 7 MAY

Iran said it was reviewing the latest American proposals to end the war after US President Donald Trump threatened the country with a new wave of bombing unless a deal is reached.

However, it is unclear what the proposal was. According to state-run Press TV, Iranian Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf noted that circulation of reports about a near end to the conflict reflected a routine pattern in US media coverage, particularly stories attributed to unnamed sources, are part of a "psychological operation".

He referred to an Axios report, which claimed that Iranian and US officials were closing in on a one-page 14-point deal to end the war, open the Strait of Hormuz, and lift sanctions on Iran in exchange for Tehran ceding its nuclear programme as "Operation Fauxios".

He posted on X that "Operation Trust Me Bro" had failed, a jab at Trump's 'Project Freedom', which aimed to escort tankers through the Strait. Trump abandoned the plan after the US only escorted two tankers.

Iran's IRIB news also posted that the Axios report might be

The USS George HW Bush (CVN 77) aircraft carrier, the largest in the world, has been enforcing the US blockade of Iranian ports —*X @CENTCOM*

> Our Chinese friends also believe that the Iran after the war is different from Iran before the war, and that it has proven its capabilities and strength. Therefore, a new phase of cooperation between Iran and other countries lies ahead
>
> -Abbas Araghchi, Iran Foreign Minister

market manipulation.

However, Pakistan said that it expects a deal soon.

"We hope the parties will reach a peaceful and sustainable solution that will contribute not only to peace in our region but to international peace as well," Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said. But he declined to give a timeline. Pakistan has been mediating the talks. Similarly Trump said a deal is "very possible".

Meanwhile, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Thursday he had met with the country's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, who has the final say in all decision making, raising speculations that a deal was indeed close. Mojtaba has not been seen in public since the US and Israel assassinated his father and former supreme leader Ali Khamenei.

IRAN CREATES AGENCY TO MANAGE HORMUZ

Iran has established a new government agency called the Persian Gulf Strait Authority to approve transit and collect tolls from shipping in the Strait, shipping data firm Lloyd's List Intelligence said. The agency is "positioning itself as the only valid authority to grant permission to ships". —Agencies

ISRAEL EXPANDS ASSAULT ON LEBANON DESPITE CEASEFIRE

WASHINGTON, 7 MAY

The Israeli Air Force on Thursday bombed southern Lebanon yet again, despite the ongoing ceasefire.

Israel's army has again ordered Lebanese residents to flee for their lives in three new areas of southern Lebanon - Deir al-Zahrani, Bafroa, and Habush, Al Jazeera reported.

Israel claimed to have struck infrastructure used by the Hezbollah for terrorist activities in the Nabatieh area and also said it killed the commander of the "Radwan Force" unit in Dahiyeh, Beirut. The strikes were approved by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Some 20 military targets of the terrorist organisation Hezbollah were attacked in southern Lebanon, Israel said.

Israel said the Radwan Force was responsible for attacks against Israeli communities and military personnel. Israel claims to have killed more than 220 Hezbollah terrorists and commanders since the ceasefire.

A ceasefire between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group was announced on 17 April by US President Donald Trump on Truth Social. —*Agencies*

An IDF soldier is being investigated for desecrating a Virgin Mary statue in occupied southern Lebanon —*x*

SAUDI FORCED US TO STOP HORMUZ OP?

WASHINGTON, 7 MAY

US President Donald Trump reportedly halted his naval operation to escort ships through the Strait of Hormuz after Saudi Arabia denied support, according to a report.

Trump called Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, but failed to secure an agreement to use the Prince Sultan Airbase southeast of Riyadh or fly through Saudi airspace, US officials told NBC News. A US official said that the airspace was crucial for the operation, given the geography.

Trump also unilaterally announced 'Project Freedom' and then notified regional allies such as Qatar, the UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia, the report stated.

Asked whether the operation had surprised the Kingdom's leaders, a Saudi source told NBC News, "the problem with that premise is that things are happening quickly in real time". The source said that Saudi Arabia is "very supportive" of Pakistan's efforts. —*ANI*

US TIES STABLE: CHINA AHEAD OF DON'S VISIT

BEIJING, 7 MAY

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that ties with Washington are stable despite "many twists and disruptions," a week before US President Donald Trump is expected to visit and meet President Xi Jinping.

"But we have still managed to maintain overall stability," Wang said during a meeting with members of a US Congressional delegation.

Senator Steve Daines agreed and said that both countries should look for stability.

Daines also recognised China's efforts to help reduce tensions in West Asia and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, including Wang's meeting with the Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

Trump is scheduled to visit China on 14-15 May. —*PTI*

US is backstabber: Iran as France moves Europe's only nuke powered warship

TEHRAN, 7 MAY

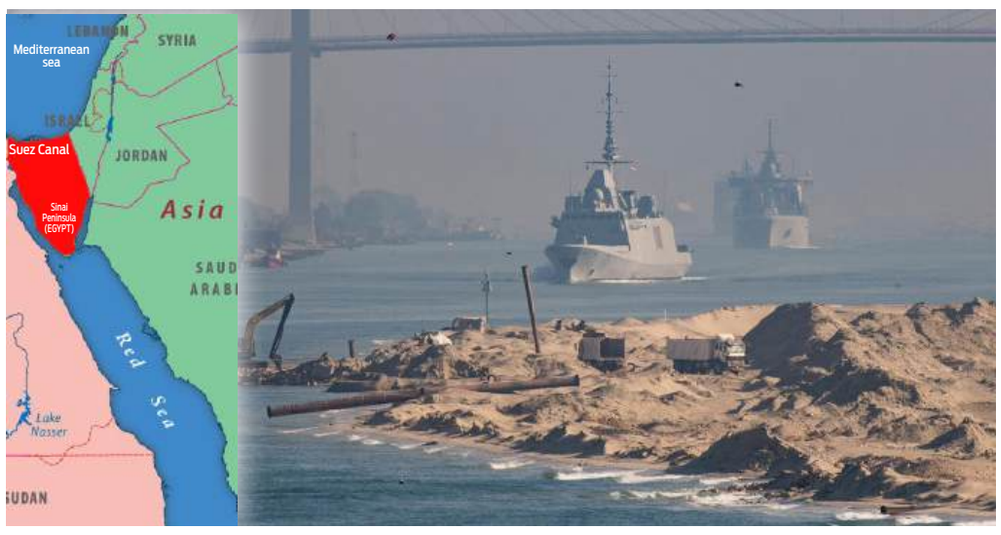
Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian told French counterpart Emmanuel Macron that described Washington's conduct during negotiations as "stabbing from behind". The call took place as France's aircraft carrier strike group is moving south of the Suez Canal and into the Red Sea in preparation for a potential French-British mission in the Strait of Hormuz. The carrier is Europe's only nuclear powered warship.

US behaviour "has diverted the path of diplomacy toward threats, pressure and sanctions", Pezeshkian said during the phone call with Macron, according to a release. Pezeshkian noted that both the previous times that Iran was engaging in dialogue with the US, they were suddenly attacked.

For his part, Macron said he condemned the "unjustified strikes against Emirati civilian infrastructure and several ships".

He added that the deployment of the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, which is Europe's most powerful warship, was part of the French-UK effort to secure the Strait. It "may help restore confidence among shipowners and insurers," Macron said on X. "It remains distinct from the parties at war."

Macron said he invited the Iranian leadership to engage more with the Europe, but added that it could only consider lifting the sanctions on Iran if the Strait is open. He said he would raise the matter with Trump. —*Agencies*



The Charles de Gaulle, dubbed Europe's most powerful warship, has traversed the Suez Canal in Egypt and moved into the Red Sea. It is to be part of the French-British mission to open the Strait of Hormuz —*X @ETATMAJORFR*

On war anniv, Pak Army stays defiant

ISLAMABAD, 7 MAY

The Pakistan Army on Thursday said that it would continue to upgrade its capabilities to meet future challenges and respond decisively to any aggression, on the first anniversary of 'Marka-e-Haq', the Pakistani name for the four-day conflict with India last year.

In response to the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were killed, India launched Operation Sindoor on 7 May, carrying out airstrikes in Pakistan and PoK, killing at least 100 terrorists.

The action triggered a rapid escalation in tensions. Pakistan's army described it as a "defining chapter" in the country's military history.

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said India had failed to prove that the Pahalgam terrorists had Pakistani support, and the conflict instead reflected the "politicisation of Indian military leadership".

He said that there had been a surge in terrorist attacks across Pakistan after the war, claiming that India was supporting militants inside Pakistan and had allied with Afghanistan to further instability. —*Agencies*

Dozens left hanta-hit ship post outbreak

THE HAGUE, 7 MAY

More than two dozen passengers left a cruise ship hit by a deadly hantavirus outbreak on 24 April without contact tracing, nearly two weeks after the first passenger died on board, the ship operator and Dutch officials said on Thursday. This raised concerns that the virus could spread as travellers returned home, although experts say the risk to the wider public is considered low.

The Dutch-based company had previously said the body of the Dutch man who died on 11 April was taken off the ship on the remote South Atlantic island of St. Helena on 24 April, when his wife also disembarked. She then flew to South Africa a day later and died there.

The company said that 29 passengers left the vessel at St Helena, while the Dutch Foreign Ministry put the number at about 40.

The people who left the ship were of at least 12 different nationalities. However, there were also two people whose nationalities are unknown.

Three passengers have died in the outbreak, and several others are still sick. —*PTI*

UKRAINE LAUNCHED 2ND LARGEST ATTACK: RUSSIA

KYIV, 7 MAY

Russian air defences shot down 347 Ukrainian drones overnight, Russia's Defence Ministry said on Thursday, in what appeared to be a major attack after Moscow spurned Kyiv's ceasefire and tension mounted over Russia's upcoming Victory Day celebrations.

Incoming drones were destroyed over 20 Russian regions, including Moscow, according to the Defence Ministry, in Ukraine's second-biggest aerial attack. The largest was last March when it launched 389 drones.

Russia proposed a ceasefire for Friday and Saturday so it could celebrate Victory Day, marking its victory over the Nazis. Ukraine countered, stating it would cease hostilities forever if attacks stopped.

"Russia has not stopped. Ukraine will act symmetrically," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. —*PTI*

Rubio meets Pope amid Trump spat

VATICAN CITY, 7 MAY

The Vatican said the "need to work tirelessly in favour of peace" was discussed in talks Thursday with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who came to Rome on a fence-mending visit after President Donald Trump's criticisms of Pope Leo XIV.

During Rubio's meeting with Leo, and the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, "the shared commitment to fostering good bilateral relations between the Holy See and the US was reaffirmed," the Vatican stated. The two exchanged views on "countries marked by war, political tensions, and difficult humanitarian situations." Trump had claimed that Leo was making the world less safe, and was "OK with Iran having nuclear weapons". —*PTI*

FOUND BY CELLMATE

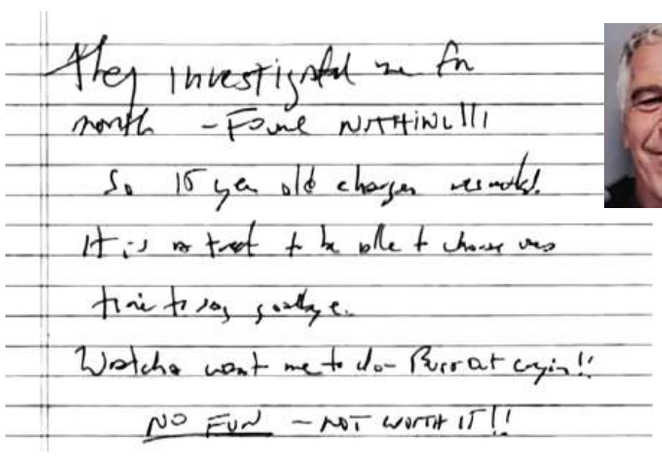
Epstein's note during 1st suicide attempt released

NEW YORK, 7 MAY

A judge ordered the release of a suicide note purportedly written by late sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein, years after being sealed and locked in a courthouse vault as part of an unrelated legal dispute.

The note, allegedly found by Epstein's cellmate after the financier's first suicide attempt, was made public on Wednesday by US District Judge Kenneth Karas in White Plains, New York after The New York Times sought information on Nicholas Tartaglione.

Few people had known about the note until Tartaglione, a former police officer serving a life sentence for killing four people, mentioned it last year on writer Jessica Reed Kraus' podcast.


they investigated me for
month - found NOTHING!!!
So 15 yr old charges resolved.
It is a treat to be able to choose
time to say goodbye.
Watcha want me to do- Burrat cry!!
NO FUN - NOT WORTH IT!!

The suicide note was allegedly found by sex offender Jeffrey Epstein's cellmate a few weeks before the financier died—*x*

Tartaglione claimed he discovered the note in a book after Epstein was found on the floor of their cell at a Manhattan federal jail on 23 July, 2019, with a strip of bedsheet around the financier's neck, three weeks before the sex trafficker was found dead in his cell in what was deemed a suicide.

"They investigated me for month -- found nothing!!!" said the note. "It is a treat to be able to choose" the "time to say goodbye."

"No fun," the note concludes. "not worth it!!"

It is unclear who wrote the note. The note wasn't mentioned the Justice Department's recently released 'Epstein Files'.

Additionally, one officer reported at the time that Epstein said he believed Tartaglione had tried to kill him. —*PTI*

Local polls open in a test for Starmer, amid Epstein outcry

LONDON, 7 MAY

Polls have opened for midterm local and regional elections, potentially delivering a significant blow to Prime Minister Keir Starmer. The centre-left Labour Party faces expected losses across about 5,000 local council seats and several mayoralties in England, alongside semi-autonomous parliaments in Scotland and Wales.

Polls opened at 7am and close at 10pm, with results likely on Friday afternoon.

Typically focused on local issues like waste collection and potholes, these elections are now seen as a referendum on Starmer's leadership and future. His popularity has plummeted since July 2024, amid struggles to boost the economy, improve public services, and control rising living costs, and the Iran conflict which hit oil supplies.

His controversial appointment of Peter Mandelson as ambassador to Washington further damaged his reputation over the envoy's ties to sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein.

Labour is defending around 2,500 seats.

A rout could spark a leadership challenge, with Reform UK, led by Nigel Farage, predicted to gain ground, especially in northern England and London's outskirts. The Green Party and Liberal Democrats are also poised for gains. —*PTI*

Women, children with 'IS links' land in Australia

MELBOURNE, 7 MAY

Two flights carrying Australian women and children with alleged ties to Islamic State have arrived in Australia. One plane with three women and eight children landed in Melbourne, while another with a woman and her son arrived in Sydney. The women, who spent years in a Syrian desert camp, plan to return, according to the government. Police say they face potential criminal charges relating to their time in ISIS's caliphate spanning Syria and Iraq. Both Qatar Airways flights departed from Doha minutes apart.

The government condemned their support for ISIS and refused to aid repatriation. Police have investigated Australians' involvement in atrocities including terrorism and crimes against humanity for over a decade. —*PTI*

Everest climbing season begins late amid risks, costs

KATHMANDU, 7 MAY

The Mount Everest climbing season has started late, with around 410 climbers and guides at base camp, undeterred by a large ice serac or high expenses. The icefall route opened on 29 April after delays caused by cracks in the serac, a dangerous ice formation.

Experts warn the serac could collapse at any time, and the route is more complex than last year.

Renowned guide Lukas Furtenbach expressed concern, stating, "The serac is a real, objective hazard."

Teams are reducing loads, timing carefully, and monitoring conditions closely.

Climate change has increased glacier melting, raising safety concerns.

Despite global tensions, Asian climbers are increasing. Nepal's Everest remains popular. China has closed its route this year. —*PTI*

Two ex-Chinese defence ministers sentenced to death

BEIJING, 7 MAY

Two former Chinese defence ministers, Wei Fenghe and Li Shangfu, received death sentences with a two-year reprieve on corruption charges from a military court. Both were members of the Central Military Commission (CMC) led by President Xi Jinping and former state councillors. Wei, 72, was convicted of accepting bribes, while Li, 68, was found guilty of accepting and offering bribes, according to Xinhua.

In China, death penalties with a reprieve are typically commuted to life imprisonment. Wei, who headed the Rocket Force until 2017 and served as defence minister until 2023, was expelled from the CPC. This move is part of Xi's ongoing purge of officials. —*PTI*

— *ANI*

Wasp named after Attenborough on his 100th birthday

LONDON, 7 MAY

To celebrate Sir David Attenborough's 100th birthday, scientists from the Natural History Museum have named a new genus of parasitic wasp and a species after him.

Attenboroughnculus tau, a tiny ichneumon wasp just 3.5mm long, was discovered in 1983 in Chile but only recently identified by volunteer Augustijn De Ketelaere.

Dr Gavin Broad, lead researcher, explained the wasp's uniqueness: "It cannot logically fit into any established genus." He added, "Nothing is yet known about its habits, but its eggs are laid inside another animal." Broad expressed hope Attenborough would be pleased, especially with the genus being named after him, though "he may not be quite as excited as about the echidna". It aims to inspire research in historic collections.—*AGENCIES*

Gold, silver prices rise amid US dollar pullback

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Gold prices increased by Rs 600 to Rs 1.56 lakh per 10 grams, buoyed by a weaker US dollar and falling crude oil prices amid optimism for a US-Iran peace deal. Silver surged Rs 7,000 to Rs 2,61,500 per kg, marking a fourth day of gains, , according to the All India Sarafa Association. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity rose from Rs 1,55,400 to Rs 1,56,000 per 10 grams, while 99.5 per cent purity traded at Rs 1,55,200. The US dollar declined 0.14 per cent to 97.88, supporting precious metals. Brent crude dropped over 3 per cent to USD 97.97. Globally, gold gained 0.9 per cent to USD 4,734.28 an ounce, and silver grew 5 per cent to USD 81.35 an ounce. —*PTI*

Rupee recovers by 23 paise to close at 94.26

MUMBAI, 7 MAY

The rupee recovered from initial losses, closing 23 paise higher at 94.26 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, as Brent crude and the dollar index declined from elevated levels. Brent oil prices fell below USD 100 per barrel amid rising investor risk appetite over US-Iran peace hopes. Despite this, foreign capital outflows and safe-haven dollar demand from importers limited sharp gains. The rupee opened at 94.77, falling 28 paise, with intraday lows of 94.90 and highs of 94.08 before settling at 94.26. On Wednesday, it appreciated 69 paise to close at 94.49. The dollar index stood at 97.86, down 0.16 per cent. Brent crude traded at USD 99.01, down 2.23 per cent. US-Iran tensions remain high, with President Trump threatening Iran over the Strait of Hormuz. —*PTI*

Emami to buy 60% stake for ₹321cr in Hyd beauty brand

KOLKATA, 7 MAY

FMCG major Emami Ltd on Thursday said it will acquire a 60 per cent stake in Hyderabad-based IncNut Digital Pvt Ltd for Rs 321 crore to strengthen its presence in the beauty and personal care segment. The transaction includes performance-linked adjustments over 24 months, the Kolkata-based company said in a statement. The company will acquire the remaining stake in IncNut, the parent company of personalised beauty and skincare brands Vedix and SkinKraft, over the next four-and-a-half years in two tranches, based on future performance parameters, it said. IncNut offers customised haircare and skincare solutions through data-driven diagnostics and personalised formulations. IncNut Founder and CEO Chaitanya Nallan said the partnership would help accelerate innovation and expand the brands' reach. —*PTI*

InCred Holdings files IPO to raise ₹1,250 cr

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Retail-focused NBFC InCred Holdings has filed updated draft papers with Sebi for its proposed Initial Public Offering (IPO), with sources estimating the issue size at around Rs 3,000-4,000 crore. Through the offering, the company is eyeing a valuation of approximately Rs 15,000 crore. The proposed IPO comprises a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 1,250 crore and an Offer For Sale (OFS) of up to 9.9 crore equity shares by existing shareholders. Those offloading shares under the OFS included KKR India Financial Investments Pte Ltd, MNI Ventures, MEMG Family Office LLP and V'Ocean Investments Ltd. The company said proceeds from the fresh issue will be infused into its wholly-owned subsidiary, InCred Financial Ltd.—*PTI*

Mkts end choppy: Sensex sheds 114 pts, Nifty 4.3 pts

Investors turn cautious amid geopolitical uncertainty

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Benchmark indices ended low in a choppy trade on Thursday, as investors turned cautious amid unabated foreign fund outflows and geopolitical uncertainties.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 114 points or 0.15 per cent to 77,844.52, and the 50-share NSE Nifty dipped by 4.30 points, or 0.02 per cent, to end at 24,326.65.

"Indian markets remained volatile throughout the session, with the Nifty closing flat amid Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 5,834.90 crore on Wednesday, crude oil prices sustaining around USD 100 per barrel, rupee weakness and uncertainty surrounding Iran's response to the proposed negotiation terms," Head of research at Motilal Oswal Financial, Siddhartha Khemka said.

During the session, Sensex hit a high of 78,384.70 and a low of 77,713.21, gyrating 671.49 points. Meanwhile, BSE MidCap Select index jumped 1.40 per cent, and SmallCap Select index climbed 1.09 per cent.

From the Sensex firms, Hindustan Unilever, Tata Consultancy, Tech Mahindra and Sun Pharma were among the major laggards. On the other hand, Mahindra & Mahindra, NTPC, Kotak and Tata Steel were among the winners.

Sectorally, IT fell 0.76 per cent, PSU Bank 0.54 per cent, Consumer Durables 0.52 per cent, FMCG 0.45 per cent, and Energy 0.11 per cent. Capital Goods jumped 2.05 per cent, Auto 1.81 per cent, Industrials 1.69 per cent, Power 1.23 per cent, and Realty 0.88 per cent.

"However, Brent crude traded 2.23 per cent lower at USD 99 per barrel amid persistent geopolitical uncertainty and cautious institutional positioning ahead of key developments kept the upside in check," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

In Asian markets, South Korea and Hong Kong were trading higher. European markets traded lower, and US markets ended sharply higher on Wednesday. —*PTI*

$19 BILLION DEAL

AirAsia orders 150 Airbus A220 jets

KUALA LUMPUR, 7 MAY

Budget airline AirAsia announced an order for 150 Airbus A220-300 jets valued at approximately USD 19 billion, marking the largest single order for this aircraft. The deal was unveiled at an Airbus factory in Quebec, with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney in attendance.

The move aims to modernise airline fleets and improve fuel efficiency amid rising fuel costs and geopolitical pressures. A220's fuel efficiency help enhance efficiency and reduce carbon footprint.

With a capacity of up to 160 seats, the aircraft can achieve profitability with fewer passengers, opening new markets and secondary hubs previously deemed unviable. AirAsia's co-founder and adviser Tony Fernandes said the order reflects the group's long-term growth ambitions and focus on cost reduction.

"In an environment of high fuel prices and volatility, the answer is not to stand still, it's to double down on efficiency. This order reflects our long-term discipline and ambitions. The A220 is the perfect tool for our next phase of growth." the company said.

The airline has the option to increase the order to 300 aircraft, covering the entire A220 family. Delivery begins in 2028, for routes across Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific.

Airbus's total firm orders for the A220 now exceed 1,000, with 501 delivered as of March 2026. —*PTI*

Air India board meets in Delhi

Loss-making Air India held a board of directors meeting in Delhi on Thursday as the airline struggles in the wake of the West Asia conflict. In addition to financial and cost-saving measures, the selection

of a new CEO is also likely to have been on the agenda. Current CEO and MD Campbell Wilson will be stepping down later this year. Meanwhile, operational costs have increased significantly in recent months, caused by airspace curbs and higher jet fuel prices due to the West Asia conflict. The Air India board is chaired by Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran.

RS 2,200 CR INVESTMENT

In addition to the new plant, Royal Enfield will also build a vendor park in the first phase by 2029, and the second phase by 2032 – *FREEPIK*

Andhra: 1st major expansion for Royal Enfield outside TN

AMARAVATI, 7 MAY

Royal Enfield, owned by Eicher Motors, will invest Rs 2,200 crore in Andhra Pradesh to establish a manufacturing facility and vendor park at Satyavedu in Tirupati.

This marks the company's first significant expansion outside Tamil Nadu. The project, approved by the State Investment Promotion Board (SIPB) chaired by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, aims to bolster Andhra Pradesh's automobile sector and create approximately 5,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Enfield's decision to invest Rs 2,200 crore in Andhra Pradesh reflects the state's robust industrial ecosystem, strong infrastructure, and investor-friendly policies, government officials stated.

Land has been allocated across Vanelluru and Rallakuppam villages in near the Tamil Nadu border. The facility will boost Enfield's manufacturing capacity by nearly nine lakh units, further strengthening India's position as a global premium motorcycle producer.

The project will also include a dedicated vendor park to bring the company's supplier ecosystem to Andhra Pradesh and support the development of an automobile manufacturing cluster. The first phase is expected to be completed by 2029, with the second phase concluding by 2032.

Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh highlighted that the state is focusing on attracting investments across mobility, electronics, renewable energy, and advanced manufacturing sectors, aiming to accelerate industrial growth and reinforce its appeal as a manufacturing hub. —*PTI*

HC refuses plea to halt Tata Trust meeting

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

The Bombay High Court refused urgent hearing on a plea on Thursday, which sought an injunction order against the Friday 8 May board meeting of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust claiming that the trust violated law.

The petition, filed by 61-year-old Thane resident Suresh Patilkhede, sought a restraining order on the trustees of the trust from implementing any decision arising out of or connected with its proposed board meeting to be held on Friday.

The plea was mentioned on Thursday before a bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam Ankhad seeking urgent hearing.

The court, however, refused and said the petitioner was at liberty to move the court's vacation bench.

The high court closes for summer vacation from Saturday.

Patilkhede sought directions to reconstitute the trust's board, alleging that the public charitable trust violated a 2025 amendment to the Maharashtra Public Trusts Act that caps the number of life trustees.

As per this amendment, if a trust's original documents do not specifically allow permanent or "life trustees", then such trustees cannot make up more than one-fourth of the total board members.

The plea claimed that under the usage and practice of the Trust, out of a total of six trustees, three perpetual trustees —also referred to as life trustees or trustees for life — were appointed between 1989 and 2019.

The petitioner added that, at present, the Trust has six trustees, including Jimmy Naval Tata, Jehangir H C Jehangir, Noel Naval Tata, Venu Srinivasan, Vijay Singh, and senior advocate Darius Khambata.

Of these, three are continuing as life trustees, the petioner claimed, stating this was "contrary to mandatory statutory limit" on the number of life trustees. —*PTI*

WAAREE BUYS 55% ASSOCIATED POWER STAKE AT G1,225 CR

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

On Thursday, Waaree Renewable Technologies Ltd said it has signed agreements to acquire 55 per cent stake in Associated Power Structures Pvt Ltd for Rs 1,225 crore.

The company said it has a Shareholders Agreement and a Share Purchase and Subscription Agreement for the transaction.

The acquisition was initially scheduled to be completed by 30 April. However, owing to transfer of existing securities and fresh allotment of shares, the process is now expected to conclude by 15 June. —*PTI*

Apple, CleanMax to invest ₹100 crore in India

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Clean Max Enviro Energy Solutions Ltd and Apple have partnered to invest Rs 100 crore for the development of energy projects across India.

The two entities aim to serve India's Commercial and Industrial segment by deploying clean energy projects across the country, CleanMax said in an exchange filing on Thursday.

"Apple and CleanMax's strategic co-investment transaction aimed at accelerating decarbonisation within India's Commercial & Industrial sector through scaled renewable energy deployment," the statement said.

The partnership reflects a shared long-term commitment towards enabling corporate clean energy transition, , and supports Apple's broader carbon neutrality goals, CleanMax said.

CleanMax is a renewable energy company for the commercial and industrial sector, across India, West Asia and Southeast Asia —*PTI*

PAYTM RULES OUT NBFC LICENCE; POSTS Q4 PROFITS

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Fintech major One97 Communications, which operates Paytm, has ruled out a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) licence, said Paytm President Madhur Deora on Thursday.

Following the RBI's cancellation of Paytm licence for non-compliance and depositor risk, One97 clarified that it has no exposure to the bank, having fully impaired its investment as of 31 March 2024.

Deora noted Paytm's preference for a "win-win" partnership model where its blue-chip lending partners manage capital, risk, and cyclicality.

Meanwhile, marking a major turnaround, Paytm reported a consolidated profit of Rs 183 crore in the Q4 FY26 compared to a loss of Rs 545 crore in the same period a year ago.

Paytm's core is payments and financial services. —*PTI*

Kotak Bank approved to acquire 9.99% share in AU, Federal banks

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Kotak Mahindra Bank has received the RBI approval to acquire up to 9.99 per cent each in AU Small Finance Bank and Federal Bank. In separate regulatory filings on Thursday, AU Small Finance Bank and Federal Bank announced that they had received the approval letter from the Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday.

Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd (KMBL) — along with its subsidiaries, the funds/schemes managed by KMBL's subsidiaries, collectively referred to as Kotak Mahindra Group — has received the RBI nod to acquire 'aggregate holding' of up to 9.99 per cent of the paid-up share capital or voting rights in AU SFB, AU Small Finance Bank said.

Similarly, Federal Bank, in a BSE filing, said the RBI has accorded its approval to Kotak Mahindra Bank for acquiring 'aggregate holding' of up to 9.99 per cent of the paid-up share capital or voting rights of the bank.

Shares of AU Small Finance Bank were trading at Rs 1,034.60, up 0.99 per cent over the previous close on the BSE. Federal Bank shares were trading 1.47 per cent up at Rs 297.40. Kotak Mahindra Bank scrip was quoting 1.12 per cent higher at Rs 380.40. —*PTI*

Alcohol industry seeks price hike, cites supply costs

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Alcoholic beverage makers are seeking a 15-20 per cent price hike from state governments to deal with supply chain disruptions triggered by the West Asia crisis.

Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) and the Brewers Association of India (BAI) urged states to allow revisions and provide relief to help manufacturers cope with rising production costs.

According to CIABC, glass manufacturing units are under severe stress due to restrictions in gas supply to glass manufacturing hubs, forcing vendors to shift towards costlier LNG or LPG.

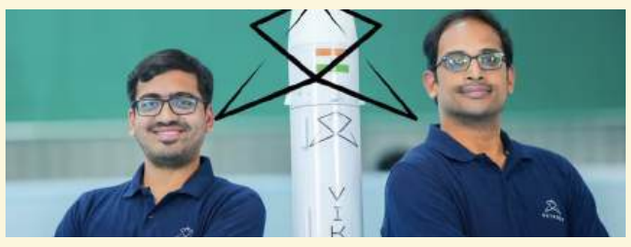
Glass manufacturers have already increased prices by 10-20 per cent, while costs of PET and aseptic packaging materials have also surged. Moreover, the beer industry expects that supply issues will persist amid rising aluminium costs.

As an interim relief measure, BAI has also sought a reduction in manufacturing levies by around Rs 3-5 per bulk litre to create a cushion against rising costs. —*PTI*

RAISES $60 MILLION

Hyd's Skyroot is India's 1st space-tech unicorn

HYDERABAD, 7 MAY



Pawan Kumar Chandana (CEO) and Naga Bharath Daka (COO), the visionary co-founders behind Skyroot Aerospace – *X/@SKYROOTAEROSPACE*

Hyderabad-based Skyroot Aerospace, a private space launch company, announced on Thursday that it has raised USD 60 million from Ram Shriram's Sherpalo, GIC (Singapore's wealth fund), BlackRock, Greenko Group founders, alongside Arkam Ventures, Playbook Partners, and Shanghvi Family Office.

Founded in July 2018 by former ISRO scientists Pawan Kumar Chandana and Naga Bharath Daka, Skyroot has quickly become a trailblazer in India's private space sector.

Skyroot is valued at USD 1.1 billion, up from around USD 519 million in 2023. Skyroot is among India's most well-funded space-tech startups and is also the first unicorn, a private company valued at USD 1 billion, to emerge from the industry.

This latest injection of capital brings Skyroot's total funding to over USD 160 million. The company plans to use the funds to establish a high cadence of Vikram-1 launches, scale manufacturing, and develop Vikram—2, a 1-tonne launch vehicle.

Following its successful 2023 orbital launch, Skyroot is now preparing for its next mission in the coming weeks.

While the founders of Playbook Partners and the Shanghvi Family Office are all new investors in Skyroot Aerospace, Sherpalo, GIC, BlackRock, Greenko Group, and Arkam Ventures are all existing company backers.

"Skyroot is building the infrastructure for that future with the best cost-to-performance ratio in the orbital-launch industry," said the company. This investment signals confidence from the world's most reputed investors, it added. —*Agencies*

India eye U-17 Women's Asian Cup history

SUZHOU, 7 MAY

Having lost to two continental heavyweights, India face a must-win game against Lebanon in the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup here on Friday, knowing that victory could seal a first-ever qualification to the knockout stage of the competition. After losing to Australia (0-2)and Japan (0-3) in Group B, the equation for India has become clear: one final match and one final chance to make the quarter-finals. India is alive in the race for the knockout stage as one of the two best third-placed teams. India currently holds a superior goal difference of -5 compared to Group C sides Philippines (-13) and Chinese Taipei (-14), who face each other on the final matchday. That means either side would require a heavy-margin victory to overtake India's goal difference if the Young Tigresses defeat Lebanon.—*PTI*

Germany defender Suele announces retirement

BERLIN, 7 MAY

Germany defender and former Bayern Munich centre-back Niklas Suele has decided to retire from football at just 30 years of age, at the end of the season.In an appearance on the Spielmacher podcast on Thursday, Suele said he made the decision to hang up his boots after injuring his knee during a match against Hoffenheim last month. "When I went for an MRI the next day and received the good news (that it wasn't a cruciate ligament tear after all), it was 1,000% clear to me that it was over," Suele said. "I couldn't imagine anything worse than looking forward to life being independent, going on holiday, spending time with my children, only to then have to come to terms with my third cruciate ligament tear."—*PTI*

David Warner to 'accept' drink-drive charge: Lawyer

SYDNEY, 7 MAY

David Warner will "accept responsibility" for drink-driving, his lawyer told reporters on Thursday after a Sydney court hearing. The 39-year-old cricketer faces a "middle-range" drink-driving charge, court documents showed, after allegedly being more than twice the legal limit in Sydney in April. Warner one of Australia's best-known sportspersons is accused of being at the wheel of a van and stopping short of a random testing site before being breath-tested, arrested and taken to a police station. "I can indicate that David will be accepting responsibility for drink-driving," defence lawyer Bobby Hill told reporters outside court, according to public broadcaster ABC.—*PTI*

PTI

Julian Metherell named as next MCC president

LONDON, 7 MAY

The Hundred franchise London Spirit Chairman Julian Metherell will take over as the President of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) for a three-year tenure from October this year, succeeding former England batter Ed Smith. Metherell has been a member of the MCC for the past 40 years and joined its Committee following approval from members at the 2025 AGM. He was nominated as the new president by Smith. Founded in 1787, the MCC is the owner of the iconic Lord's Cricket Ground and the guardian of the laws that govern the game.—*PTI*

Surface Tension: DC batters face stern Varun-Narine test

DC is currently in seventh position with eight points

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

PTI

Unable to negotiate tricky batting tracks or defend big totals on belters, there seems to be no comfort even on home turf for Delhi Capitals when they take on Kolkata Knight Riders in a must-win IPL game here on Friday.

Delhi Capitals, currently in seventh position with eight points from 10 games, need to win all four of their remaining games to reach 16 points and sneak into the playoffs.

The eighth-placed KKR need to win all five of their remaining matches to leapfrog to 17 points in order to remain relevant. In this backdrop, what becomes important is the surface on which DC will play the game. It is understood that to counter the threat of spin twins Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy, DC is likely to opt for a batting belter and will be playing on Pitch No.6, the track on which they scored 264 but failed to defend against the Punjab Kings.

On a slowish surface where the ball gripped, the DC batters failed to come to terms with Rashid Khan of the Gujarat Titans and Akeal Hosein and Noor Ahmed of the Chennai Super Kings.

Sunil (Economy Rate of 6.80) and Varun (Economy Rate of 8.88) can make life miserable for the likes of Pathum Nissanka, Sameer Rizvi, and Karun Nair, to name a few.

DC VS KKR @ Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi
Match starts at 7.30 pm IST

The only advantage DC will have is that KKR's pain point is also its top-order performance. The two main batters at the top, skipper Ajinkya Rahane (205 runs at a strike rate of 131.42) and Angkrish Raghuvanshi (268 runs at 137.43), haven't been able to grab the initiative in most of the games.

Australia players to stay back in IPL

Cricket Australia on Thursday confirmed that its players, including skipper Pat Cummins, will be allowed to fulfil their IPL 2026 commitments, exempting them from the three-match ODI series against Pakistan, which begins in 30 May. The league phase of the IPL concludes on 24 May, while the tournament's final will be played on 31 May.The Australian players are scheduled to arrive in Islamabad on May 23, overlapping with the IPL's business end. "Yes, we have received communication that the Australian players in our squad will stay back for the IPL," a source in the Sunrisers Hyderabad told PTI. —*PTI*

WFI INTRODUCES FRESH ELIGIBILITY RULES

Phogat set to miss Asian Games trials

NEW DELHI, 7 MAY

Vinesh Phogat is set to miss the upcoming Asian Games selection trials after the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) announced fresh eligibility criteria that effectively shut the door on her comeback hopes.

Just months before the Continental Games, the WFI stated that only medal winners from select national-level competitions held in 2025 and 2026 will be eligible to participate in the trials. The decision comes as a major setback for the former World Championships medallist, who has not competed in any professional event since her heartbreaking disqualification at the 2024 Summer Olympics. The women's trials are scheduled to be held on 30 May at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, while the men's freestyle and Greco-Roman trials will take place at the SAI Regional Centre in Lucknow on 31 May. Under the new guidelines, eligibility for the Asian Games trials will be restricted to medal winners from: The 2025 Senior National Wrestling Championship in Ahmedabad The 2026 Senior Federation Cup in Ghaziabad

The 2026 Under-20 National Wrestling Championship in Bhilai. Since Vinesh did not participate in any of these tournaments, the criteria virtually eliminate her from contention for the trials.

The development also appears to validate concerns earlier raised by the wrestler regarding her strained relationship with the federation. Vinesh had previously alleged that the WFI was creating obstacles in her attempt to return to the domestic circuit. That effectively means Vinesh will not get an opportunity. The registration for it was open till 30 April. However, when I tried to register, the portal said it is now closed," Phogat had said. —*PTI*

Continuing with the same form is not going to help us, says Shreyas after PBKS suffer third consecutive defeat

Punjab Kings skipper Shreyas Iyer admitted that while his side enjoyed a "fairytale" start to the 2026 Indian Premier League (IPL) season, its recent slump is a worrying sign heading into the business end of the tournament.

Punjab had emerged as the team to beat with six wins from its first seven matches, but has since suffered three consecutive defeats, including a 33-run loss to Sunrisers Hyderabad on Wednesday.

"I feel we got a fairytale start in the tournament, and everyone was in a great space. If we are going to continue with the same form, that's not going to help us," Iyer said at the post-match presentation.

The Kings endured yet another disappointing outing in the field, with dropped catches and missed stumpings proving costly.

"It (the target) was a bit too much because we dropped catches at the start, and we could have easily delayed their score by 30 to 40 runs. The wicket kept getting slower. They played comprehensive cricket and showed us how to win the match."

The lone bright spot for Punjab was Cooper Connolly's unbeaten century in his debut IPL season.

"Connolly is phenomenal. His mindset is top-notch, and the character he brings onto the field. It's something that all players can learn from him. And apart from that, I feel that he's got a knack for scoring big runs in pressure situations."

With the win, Sunrisers Hyderabad moved to the top of the points table, and skipper Pat Cummins was pleased with his side's all-round performance.

TUMAKURU OPEN: TOP SEEDS SAIL THROUGH TO QUARTERS AT ITF W35

TUMAKURU, 7 MAY

The stage is set for an exciting finish at the Tumakuru Open ITF W35 as all the top seeds stormed into the singles quarterfinals after a gripping day of action here on Thursday.

Top seed Justina Mikulskyte survived a dramatic start against Poland's Zuzanna Kolonus before bouncing back strongly to register a 0-6, 6-3, 6-1 victory. The Lithuanian, one of the tournament favourites, recovered impressively after being bagelled in the opening set and now looks firmly back on track heading into the business end of the tournament. Second seed Zuzanna Pawlikowska also continued her steady run with a straight-sets win over India's Sonal Patil, while third seed Vaidehee Chaudhari and fourth seed Zeel Desai ensured strong Indian representation in the last eight with commanding victories.

Vaidehee looked in complete control during her 6-2, 6-2 win over compatriot Madhurima Sawant, displaying aggressive baseline play and consistency throughout the contest.

The Indo-Japanese pair of Akanksha Dileep Nitture and Michika Ozeki fought back brilliantly after losing the first set to overcome India's Diva Bhatia and Jennifer Luikham in a tense match tiebreak. —*PTI*

MCA

T20 Mumbai League 2026: Inaugural women's league to be held from 1-13 June

MUMBAI, 7 MAY

The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) on Thursday announced that the fourth season of the T20 Mumbai League and the inaugural edition of the T20 Mumbai Women's League will be held from June 1 to 13 at the Wankhede Stadium. "The men's and women's competitions will be conducted simultaneously," the MCA added in a statement. "The T20 Mumbai League has consistently played an important role in strengthening Mumbai's cricketing ecosystem and providing opportunities for emerging players to perform alongside some of the biggest names in the game. Conducting both the men's and women's tournaments at the Wankhede Stadium reflects the MCA's commitment to creating a larger and more inclusive platform for talent development and taking Mumbai cricket to a wider audience," MCA president Ajinkya Naik said.

The men's competition will feature some of the biggest names in world cricket as well as Mumbai's most promising emerging players, including Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, Ajinkya Rahane, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shivam Dube, Sarfaraz Khan, Shardul Thakur, Tushar Deshpande, Ayush Mhatre, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Musheer Khan, Suryansh Shedge and Abhigyan Kundu, among others. —*PTI*

ARCHERY WORLD CUP

Women upset Korea to assure India's first medal; men crash out

SHANGHAI, 7 MAY

India endured a mixed day at the Archery World Cup Stage 2 as the women's recurve team assured the country's first medal with a stunning semifinal win over record 10-time Olympic champions South Korea, but the men suffered a disappointing opening-round exit against Bangladesh here on Thursday.

The women's team of seasoned Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and teenager Kumkum Mohod defeated a new-look Korean side 5-1 in the semifinals to set up a gold medal clash against second seed China on Sunday.

But there was embarrassment for the men's recurve team as veteran Tarundeep Rai, Dhiraj Bommadevara and Yashdeep Bhoge failed to win a single set in a below-par 2-6 defeat to Bangladesh.

However, the Indian women's team maintained composure throughout a demanding day in which they won three consecutive matches.

The women's recurve team assured the country's first medal with a stunning semifinal win over South Korea -*PTI*

The fourth-seeded Indians started strongly in the semifinal, shooting four 10s from six arrows and dropping just two points to take the opening set with a superb 58.

The Koreans looked unsettled and managed only 55 after shooting an 8.

India slipped slightly in the second set with an 8 but still managed to tie at 56-56 and move 3-1 ahead.

Needing just two more points to seal the match, the Indians again shot 58 in the third set, while the Koreans faltered under pressure and managed 56, handing India a memorable straight-set victory.

But the win came against an inexperienced Korean line-up which was fielded as part of their preparations for the Asian Games in Japan, less than four months away. —*PTI*

HOCKEY INDIA ANNOUNCES U-18 MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SQUADS FOR AUSTRALIA SERIES

BHOPAL, 7 MAY

Hockey India on Thursday announced the 24-member Indian U-18 Men's and Women's squads for the upcoming home series against Australia, to be held from 15 to 20 May.

The four-match series, to be played at SAI Bhopal, is a critical part of the teams' preparations for the Men's and Women's U-18 Asia Cup, to be held in Kakamigahara, Japan, from 29 May to 6 June.

The squad members were selected after a week of rigorous evaluation during the national coaching camp, where the initial group of 42 players was narrowed down based on match fitness and tactical adaptability. Forward Ketan Kushwaha has been named captain of the Indian U-18 men's team, while the Indian U-18 women's side will be led by Sweety Kujur. "After a productive week in the camp, we have identified the 24 players who we believe are ready for international exposure.

These matches against Australia are not just practice games, as they are a vital test of our match temperament and tactical discipline. —*PTI*

U-18 MEN'S & WOMEN'S SQUAD

- Goalkeepers: Sawan Kumar, Ayush Rajak, Vishal Bada; Defenders: Ansh Bahutra, Ashish Tani Purti, Arman Soreng, Deepakprakash Toppo, Karan Gautam, Karan Dhanuk; Midfielders: Premchand Soy, Rahul Yadav, Varinder Singh, Romit Pal, Arjandeep Singh, Gursimranpreet Singh, Arshdip Singh, Avi Manikpuri; Forwards: Akash Deep, Ketan Kushwaha (Captain), Shahrukh Ali, Gazee Khan, Prahalad Rajbhar, Siddharth Ben, Jaysan Kandulna%
- Goalkeepers: Mahak Parihar, Harry, Khili Kumari; Defenders: Sugan Sanga, Nilam Topno, Rubina Baxla, Kiran Ekka, Divya Yadav, Sulochani; Midfielders: Shruti Kumari, Diya, Harshita, Rashmeen Kaur, Laminganbi Akoijam, Nancy Saroha, Tongbram Lanchenbi Devi, Sneha Davde; Forwards: Nousheen Naz, Sweety Kujur (Captain), Priyanka Minz, Sandeepa Kumari, Nammi Geetashree, Princess Priya Ekka, Pushpa Manjhi

Football WC will be missing some star players

LONDON, 7 MAY

Kylian Mbappe is sidelined with a hamstring injury.

Lamine Yamal is out for the rest of the season, and so is Brazil star Estêvão.

There was also a scare when Mohamed Salah hurt his hamstring recently.

Injuries to some of soccer's biggest names are mounting ahead of the World Cup, which starts in five weeks.

Mbappé is expected to play again for Real Madrid this month, and there is no suggestion his issue will rule him out of the World Cup. But every setback to France's best player will be of concern to the national team.

Barcelona's teenage sensation Yamal — recuperating from a leg muscle injury — is also expected to be part of Spain's squad and appear at his first World Cup.

And initial fears about Salah have been dispelled.

Others, however, have not been so fortunate. France's Hugo Ekitike sustained an Achilles injury in April that could take more than six months to fully recover, ruling him out of the tournament co-hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico and possibly the start of next season. —*PTI*

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

PSG Dembele's goal stifles Bayern Munich

MUNICH, 7 MAY

Ousmane Dembele scored early, and Paris Saint-Germain eliminated Bayern Munich with a 1-1 draw to reach the Champions League final again on Wednesday night.

Khvicha Kvaratskhelia raced clear after playing a simple one-two with Fabián Ruiz in midfield, then picked out the unmarked Dembélé to sweep the ball in under the crossbar in the third minute of the semifinal second leg.

By the time Harry Kane equalized in stoppage time, it was too late to keep alive Bayern's dream of a Bundesliga, German Cup, and Champions League treble.

The draw gave PSG, the defending champion, a 6-5 win on aggregate after edging their encounter 5-4 in the first leg in Paris last week.

The French league leader will face Arsenal in the final in Budapest, Hungary, on May 30, after the Gunners defeated Atletico Madrid 1-0 on Tuesday to progress 2-1 on aggregate.

"It's magnificent, two finals," PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi said. "Now we will go there and try to fetch a second star. I said to the players We are warriors."

PSG's win celebrations turn violent

Nearly 130 people were arrested around Paris overnight as fans clashed with police following Paris Saint-Germain reaching the Champions League final, Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez said on Thursday.

He told Europe 1 radio that the total number of arrests was 127 in the Paris metropolitan area, including 107 in Paris, after title-holder PSG eliminated Bayern Munich to reach a second-straight final and third since 2020.

PSG reached the final on Wednesday night after eliminating Bayern Munich.

Next-to-last Nantes will be relegated to Ligue 2 unless it beats Lens on Friday. —*PTI*

Ousmane Dembele -X/@PSG